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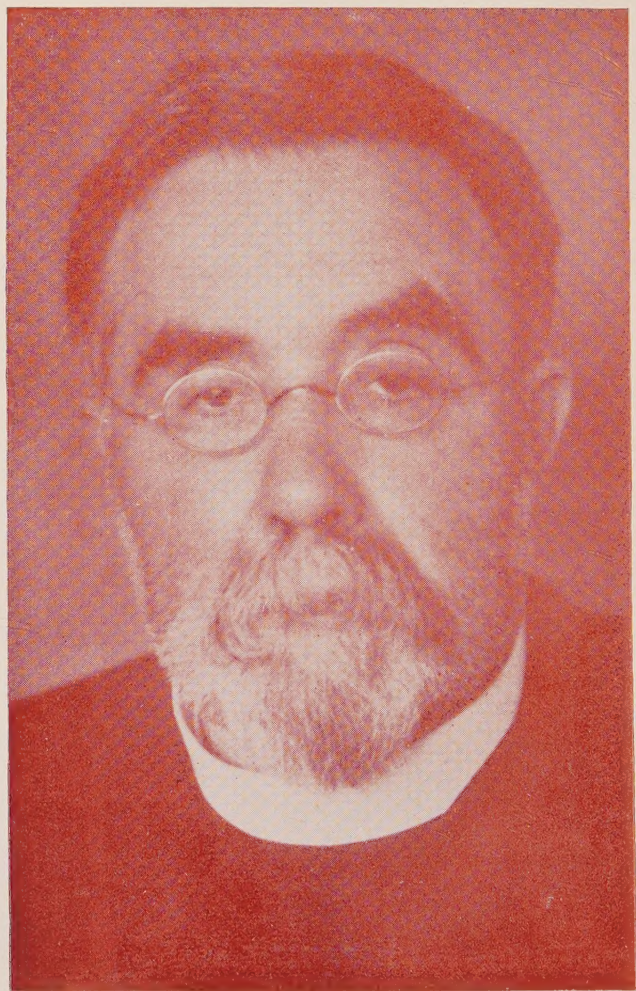


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**FROM THE TOPS OF
THE HILLS**

These Papers are selections from articles which appeared in the 'Methodist Recorder,' by whose courtesy they are now given permanent form as a Memorial Volume.



ARTHUR HOYLE

1857-1928

FROM THE TOPS OF THE HILLS

BY
ARTHUR HOYLE

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FROM THE TOPS OF THE HILLS

I

FROM THE TOPS OF THE HILLS

ON one of the higher hills I used to frequent—now, alas, too high for me—was usually to be seen a barrel of a man, with a round red face, leaning with his arms across a stone wall. Passers-by were ungreeted of him, engaged, as he was, with the far distance. I do not know how many times I went by him or ever I dared to speak. There he was, with his eyes far away, as still as the hills themselves. No roving of the glance—right forward he gazed, as a statue. It is a bit of an adventure to accost one so fixed and firm, immobile, and indifferent; but one day I ventured. He was standing, as he always stood, in his hen-run, his back to the hens and his soul far, far away—at least so I surmised. Hens and eggs gave me my opening. When we had broken our ice the man was as genial as the air—the summer air. Hens didn't pay. He had no eggs to sell; he had pledged them all to a lad who had lost a leg in the war; he

made nothing out of hens ; they kept him from a ' war turn '—the public-house, to wit—and that was all there was to it. He was a far sight better up there, better in pocket and better in health, with his hens and the hills, than in any public-house in the land—and so on. With all of which I agreed. He could tell me what lay behind every range in front of us. The ranges behind I did not question. That country was unknown to me. In the field under a stone-wall he had brought an old sofa ; at any rate an old sofa was there, though I never saw it occupied. There the man was, on the summits—'in maiden meditation fancy free.' Of course I have read, with delight, eloquent and moving passages in which mountaineers have put on record indescribable emotions among vast spaces, amid virgin peaks, virgin snowfields, and the ineffable grandeurs of Alpine airs and altitudes. Yet this country friend touches closer home. With the other I never could have attained. With this man fellowship was possible. Unfortunately he was inarticulate. I did not ask him why he leaned, and with longing gazed. He would not have told me had he been able. To fuss and harry such an one would have been rude, and he never broke silence. If I said anything of the grandeur—in modest Yorkshire phrase—he would only say, ' Aye,' and fix his eyes farther off still. What might he see ?

Most of us have seen someone with what is known as ' a far-away look in their eyes ' ; with lifted head, nothing concerned them save the distant. Now and

then one meets it in the street—mostly in men—though only seldom. There is a ‘yonderly air.’ The din of traffic is not heard ; the pavements, to these, are never crowded ; a gift of threading through any human maze or hustle seems instinctive ; on they go, seeing Jacob’s ladder pitched at Charing Cross—or any other thronging mart of mortal things—Jacob’s ladder—that eternal glory of the horizons. Earlier than either comes back to me boyish recollection of the hill fever. My earliest home had no hills immediately near ; yet beyond the distant town was a vast lift of country—green to the summit ; to the right of it was a higher lift still—barren, bare moors, in the hollows of which great waters were lodged for the homes and industries of the people. To the left was a wooded height. It was my joy to play about in the fields of the hollow thus surrounded. Often I would stand and gaze and wonder what lay beyond that dim line against the sky—long to wander and climb and discover the better country beyond, that refuge of romance dear to a boy, and at our best dear to us all. I have never been able to analyse these emotions or to say what the yearning meant. Why does one look out to the hills? Charles Kingsley didn’t, if I remember rightly ; he liked great wide flats, a vast expanse of open plain ; but Kingsley was fond of hounds, and that explains somewhat. A pure and passionate soul he was ; so purity and passion do not demand hills. Neither, it seems to me, are hills set for our defence,

to folk such as I am. It is nothing to me that the hills might be a fortress. That has fallen from our ordinary blood, in these islands—so long inviolable. During the war one would look, odd times, upon the Pennines and wonder what the Germans might do if ever they got among them—or rather what we wouldn't do to the Germans. It was a passing fancy; a primitive return, amid the arousal of primitive passions. The problem of the hills has haunted me much, lately—what means this hunger and thirst for summits? Moses died upon the top of Pisgah, by the kiss of God. It seems a fitting, a just consummation of a great man's great life. Why should it seem so? Nothing in the poetry of the Old Testament is greater than the death of Moses. Why is it so great, so moving and so entirely in harmony with one of the noblest achievements in human history?

I do not know whether it is possible even to hint intelligently at the things one dimly feels. You climb a hill—and then? There is always another hill beyond. What does it serve therefore? This, perhaps—a sense of other openings, of space, of escaped confinement, liberty, not tethered and tied by the leg any longer; life has enlarged its sphere; divers riddles have been read. All put together does not amount to much—the riddles and their solution least of all. Yet, somehow, in these attainments, conquerings of any summit, an appeal is made, satisfaction is given to a poignant, and sometimes pressing, insistence of the soul or hunger

of the heart—wearied of earth and laden with its sin. We want more room, lower and fewer barriers. Most of us are like that ; we rebel against our limitations. Those who have joy on summits, maybe, are those who take consolations among symbolisms purely natural. There is a touch of the prophetic mood, of the poet's comprehension, and the two quicken out of hints, glimpses, and achievements purely physical—if there be anything at all purely physical. This may be something. Of course imagination had been at work or ever you lifted foot at the base of the hill ; the wonder of the summit had caught you. A picture of what might be there, awaiting yonder, drew you with strong desire. You had speculated innocently, inflamed your thought by pictures ; then you put it to the test to gain or lose it all. From the summit, as I said—for the most part or for most of us—imagination has increased its hold and its resources. One has been conquered, housed home in vision and remembrance ; others admit our quest and effort. If our vision and our achievement be enlarged, our eyes have further scope, is it not true the imagination is enlarged and invited beyond either? The valleys discovered among lower hills ; unveiled villages ; peaceful homes of men on the sides of the slopes—roads and the river—what of them and how do they summon and call? It has always seemed to me the joy of life, and the content of life depends very largely on increased scope and challenge of imagination. To have nothing to dream

about is to be stale. On the tops of the hills we gather such stuff as dreams are made of—in a better and a blessed sense. By our dreams we live, not by anything else. The summit of any hill is a dream come true and a hundred other dreams begun.

Standing there, looking with new eyes on a new world, or upon an old world from a new angle—which is much the same thing—you flit from scene to scene, from interest to interest, round the horizon. A clump of wood to the right ; a spire to the left : you swing round and behind you is a lordly pleasure house—no bigger than a man's hand ; horses are at their toil in ploughed fields or harvesting the corn ; men and women, as mites, come and go. Or, all humanity is blotted and impossible, since the land is wild and barren, or your altitude is victorious over the forms and the visibilities of any living thing. There you are, however ; from the one to the other you flit, variously, at will, and with the quickness of the changing thought or a changing glance. You are there—here—yonder and away as the flash of light, the falling of a shadow. To the illusion of enlargement and escape there is added the illusion of swift motion. As the confining earth, the grapple and clinging of gravitation has been overthrown, as you have escaped locality and found expansion, so you are not bound by the body ; this all too solid flesh has melted and gone ; you become pure spirit and wing abroad at will, governed by purpose and desire alone. Again, here

is a most pathetic fallacy ; yet it is something more ; there is in it a kind of premonition, an invitation, provocative of hope sustained and comforted by analogy, a seductive similitude. We are not what we are, but what we want to be—say the moralists. A poet sings quite confidently—the thing we long for that we are, for one transcendent moment—and the poet was an American. It is a great thing to enlarge, to become spacious ; it is perhaps a greater thing still to be able to subdue space according to one's desire. There is no need to say more—running on wheels of words upon those narrow ridges dividing the sublime from the ridiculous.

One thing more—in the sense of far distances, afforded by high hills, there is an aesthetic quality, a ministration of beauty impossible of analysis or of definition. What is it in a picture lends charm to anything, any subject, if there also be a vista ? It is a commonplace that most really great pictures have in them at least a speck of the sky ; the blue or a cloud adds glory and something beyond the wit of man. No man can say in what beauty is. Distance and a far-flung scope of vision provides a certain tone, impressiveness, awe, a wild surmise—silent on a peak in Darien. Imagination is at work. Something else is at work, beyond imagination, yet confederate. The appeal of the universe may or may not be entirely subjective. For my part I cannot, for a moment, suppose we make all the beauty we discern. There is something outside

us, a summons as well as a response. I care not a fig for the nice observation of the philosophers, demonstrating how impossible this really is. Against their show I shoot out my sheer hardness of heart to believe. A certain harmony, truth and reality and marvel make their appeal in the sense of distance—surveyed at rest and in quietness of mind. We have fellowship with we know not what, but the fellowship is dear and refreshing to our hearts. A sense of the mystery of things is almost as consoling as a sense of the meaning of things. A world without mystery might be a dreary and commonplace habitation of prigs and little tin gods. Those who know everything are very, very wearisome. Did we know everything, might we not be very wearied of ourselves? So distance comes in. We have solved many problems on the summit ; it is conceivable by the same methods we might solve all the other problems our first summit multiplied and urged ; yet, when we have done all, gone down every lane, invaded every home, exhausted all the eye can rest upon, land after land and sea after sea—even then there will remain the mystery of distance, the enchantment of the spaces between, the magic thus woven, the inhibitions thus imposed, the sad and the joyous influence mystically shed. Who can say what the meaning and the marvel of mere distance amounts to—in the loneliness of life, in the vastness of the ages, in the infinity of God ?

II

THE BURDEN OF SOULS

IT is not the lust of conquest, not a sheer desire to bring them over to us. The heart of the passion for souls is the fellowship of His suffering, an infinite desire that in these very people God and man be reconciled, that our brethren should attain, that our Lord should be crowned. It is not satisfied with conversions. Then its sorer burden comes. Until Christ be formed in them, they are carried in the heart, borne upon the wings of our prayers, guarded, tended, mourned over ; with tears and with smiles, the holy man would impart unto them his own soul also. It is a high experience ; it is a noble anguish.

The burdens of them that labour in the Kingdom of God are many, and they vary in quality and in the power that places them. The burden of difficulties with men, with schemes, with managements, is harassing enough. There is in it a certain quality that produces soundness of judgement, tact, the grace of patience, and gentleness, and tolerance. If that burden be properly carried, there comes a time when

the very possibility of such burdens vanishes away, and the man who has succeeded goes on to succeed. We can meet these difficulties by sense; humour comes to our aid and sweetens many a bitter cup; we moderate our desires and take a reasonable view; we do not ask too much and are content with less than we have asked—so we win through. The burden is carried, and our strength is multiplied by the thing that is laid upon us. When we pass on to another sphere, when it is no longer administration, but the seeking of men, the desire to bring them in, that they may hear the joyful sound, then the burden takes another kind of pressure, and weights us in a different part. The thin class, the meagre congregation, the heedless crowd that passes by—we feel the bereavement and the forsaking, the heedlessness and the vanity. But, here again, we can fall back upon expedients. There are things that we can do, doors that we can open—wisdom, and cunning thought, and policy, audacity and charm, and the ringing of bells; these things will help us. We can summon the wits of our fellows, and lay our minds open to their teachings, and by a reasonable and skilful course of allurements they come. No man need fail here—if he is willing to pay the price, if, all things considered, he is sure that this is the first thing—a full house. And this burden well borne, carried in the name of the Lord, makes a man more of a man, dowers him with invaluable gifts. But let us not, any of us, think

that either of these burdens is the burden of souls. Except in some remote and secondary way, except as preliminary and as the part of a poor player, this is another and a different weight altogether, a meaner and a lower thing, a lighter and a more trivial load.

The burden of souls may be carried *under* these things, and then it eases them ; but in easing them it increases itself. Many a man goes lightly through these preliminary difficulties because he has a far vision, carries these weights lightly, wonderfully lightly, just because deep down he has another weight that makes them but as the small dust of the balance. The passion for souls is not impatient and scornful of the letter of the law, and of the price that has to be paid. It endures many yokes, knowing they are necessary to be borne. It is a reasonable sacrifice that burns upon the altar. But when all these things have been gone through successfully, when the administrative problems have been solved, when the people are all there, then is the moment of pain, then the burden is intolerable to be borne, it is then that there comes that strange and holy burning, that mystic something that is more precious than life, that a man will waste his all to carry through. It is possible to rest content on the solution of the practical difficulty, and to sing a song—just a song of sixpence ! It is possible, after we have attained, in these lesser things, to sit down, or go on to another place, to enjoy the

congratulations, to feel the flush of gratitude, and with folded hands to worship God for His mercies. And they *are* mercies—the mercies of the hewer of wood and the drawer of water—Gibeonitish mercies, but not the glory of His people Israel. When every other burden has sunk away, been transfigured, or burned up in the fire of our enthusiasm, it is then that the burden of souls comes home and is heavy upon us—as the hand of God is heavy.

When all is well, and all are gathered, or even when all is not well, and only a few are gathered, there comes upon the faithful steward a visitation ; he has had glimpses of the true end ; he has been spoken to in the secret place of His pavilion ; he is fresh from some mountain where the Son of Man has been transfigured once more, and the heart yearns over these people that they may share the like precious gifts, that they also may be carried into the secret place and see the Glory of the Lord. To some among us this comes not as an occasional visitation ; it abides with them as the one consuming passion of the years. Their days pass as a dream, and in the face of a multitude they are tossed and troubled, deep in their hearts, by a mighty yearning, that knows itself too small, that can only stagger back upon the infinite strength and solace of the Power of the Lord. In the emotion and wave of these spiritual impulses they are carried on to strange victories—sometimes serenely, and at other times in a great turbulence of passion. But let no man think

that such hours are hours of triumph ; they are hours of humiliation, of sweet pain, of chastening that is not sore, only because of a low, whispering joy ; they are wearying hours, hours when virtue goeth out of a man, hours that leave him depleted, a miserable prey to hell, unless God watch him very tenderly. Yet these moments are the great moments of the burden of souls, the moments of recompense, the moments when the poor blind eye can see what God means by the exceeding heaviness of His Hands. The burden remains when the people are not there. It rests upon him in lonely hours, in the study, in the street, among men, and all through the watches of the night. Sometimes the prisoner of the Lord escapes, or his Master sets him to walk at large, with a free spirit, in that light where no burdens are. Sometimes he will so walk at large for weeks ; God is giving to His prophet a season of calm weather. Then it will suddenly fall out that the glimpse of a face, the voice of a little child, a verse from a poet, a snatch from an old song, a cloud in the sky, the happy autumn fields, spread out before his eyes—and, he knows not how, the hallowed burden is home again, and again he goes forth, neither smitten of God nor afflicted, but full of the fellowship of His sufferings.

Then, it may be, that the servant of the Lord has to go apart. There is no one like-minded with himself. He looks wistfully to the right hand and to the left ; he asks shy questions and half unveils his heart.

But no one understands. ‘My people doth not consider.’ He is driven out into the wilderness, not to be tempted of the devil, but bearing the sins of the people. He does not name it as a wilderness; he does not think of the sins of the people—he thinks of God and of them; and it is not sin that troubles him, it is hunger, and pain of the frustrated, anguish that heaven should be so far and the sons of men have desolate habitations. In such a mood and in such high hours there are no expedients, no schemes; then there are no wise ones to whom he can go for counsel. The things that are to be done all seem impertinent to the issue. This is too great a matter for any device. It is beyond a little persuasion, and compromise cannot be suggested. Who among us has not had this experience? It is the incommunicable burden of souls. It is in the wide dispersion of such visitations that the way of the Lord is prepared; and, when two or three so agree together in things concerning His kingdom, it shall be done unto them even as they will.

What does this experience mean for the man upon whom it has come? Well, let him not abide alone. It is at the peril of his very reason that he hoard his treasure—for treasure it is—though a treasure of the darkness. Let him go forth and seek and seek until he find some man like minded. When God has one after this kind, He hath another. He hides them apart, only that they may have the joy of finding. No

man can tell where he shall find his fellow. He shall look to the friend of his youth and often be disappointed ; he shall turn to them that appear to be pillars, and discover that God accepteth no man's person ; and probably, after much searching, he shall meet his companion in the tribulation and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, on an isle called Patmos. But let him not dare to be lonely long. It is a fire that, burning apart, consumes him upon whom it is kindled. God's every gift is a gift of fellowship. Every call of His Spirit is a call to meet two or three in His name and for His sake. The fire leaps up to the fuel, though it be afar off ; it will conquer distance, and grasp other nourishing things, just as it is hot and famous at the first root. No, the burden of souls was never meant to be carried alone. It has to be shared—for the love of all and in the love of God—shared, but not divided. Surely this experience means that a man is near to God. Do not let us shrink from recognizing the fact. The man who has the experience does not think of where he is ; he is thinking of where other people are, and going out to them with desire. He lays no flattering unction to his soul, in its sadness. But at times he is so cast down, that one may softly remind him of the holiness of the ground whereon he stands. To be near to this strange fire is to be near to God, to be within the very circle of His highest goings forth. At the heart of the burden there is a blessed attainment. It is seen in the

Lord's own prayer, with its wistful yearnings over 'them that Thou hast given Me' and 'that the world might know.' In Him there is a strange peace. Our burden He wears as a crown. There is no strain, no anguish, but a sure confidence that as He wills so it shall be. We have no power so to bear up. So to bear the burden is denied to us—but the burden is the same. It is to St. Paul that we find ourselves better akin; both the burden and the noble pain are in him. And is it not because of this travail over the souls of men that we feel the awe and power of the great Apostle, that we honour him as one who was chief with his Lord, and had been baptized into the same spirit. The burden of souls is the seal of a saint; it is an anguish that is on the heart of life; it is the sorrow that is God's own sorrow. It is a kind of aftermath, which shows that God has reaped the field of our hearts and blessed it. Shall a man then cultivate this burden? No. Not by any manner of means. It is not a growth; it is a gift. It comes by His Presence. It is the first fruit of a close companionship. We make many mistakes in our anxieties about the Kingdom, but none so great as those that keep us away from the King. If a man would know the burden of souls, let him come home; let him make much of home; let him understand the sweetness and joy, the security and peace, of the Father's House; let him sing and murmur such hymns as 'Thou Shepherd of Israel and mine,' 'Open, Lord, my inward

ear, and bid my heart rejoice ' ; let him lie low, and hide in the very crevices of the floor of His temple crying, ' Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts ' ; let him never think of being a strong man to run a race ; let his heart break down and melt and flow—

So shall I all my strength exert
And love them with a zeal like Thine.

III

ON LONELY SAINTS

THE other week, in one of those dithyrambic articles one finds so commonly confessing the baffled mind, I saw a florid statement that it was the alone mission of the Church to seek and to save the lost. Lately, I have been trying to make out something of the meaning of the Church, and to place its nature and its mission before my mind in some clear light. While one cannot but have sympathy with this point of view, and while all that helps the fallen, and seeks to redeem them out of the snare of the Devil, must be for ever venerable to the heart, in seeking the truth it is necessary to be exact, and to find the thing that is real, even if it does not at all times meet the yearning. We never know when the yearning may turn up that the unwelcome truth may meet, at the last. There is nothing that can be said against the truth, and if we do not find the truth there is sure to be something lacking in the practical utilities and affections, one day. Is it the truth that it is the alone mission of the Church to seek and to save the lost?

Of course much depends on what you mean by the lost. If it means humanity at large, I have no desire to differ from the definition ; if all the members of the Church are of the lost as well as those who are without, there is nothing much to quarrel with. But if it means that we are to care only for those who are outside, and that, once we get them ' saved,' we have all to launch ourselves in the adventure of getting other ones saved, then I must find some other definition to satisfy what I regard as the facts of the case. It is undoubtedly the duty of the Church to seek and to save that which was lost ; but there are other things within our line of duty, and these other things, I venture to think, are quite as important as the ones that are asserted in the definition to be sole.

The nearest I can come to fellowship with this definition is to say that it is the mission of the Church to help men to goodness. I do not think that even such a definition is at all complete ; but it is the nearest I can come to the brother who offered the other one. Of course my definition looks innocently like the other one in some particulars ; but I have chosen it because it is so extremely unlike. If I may make one other confession, I have tried so to frame the definition that the Church may be of some use to me. I cannot believe in any Church that has nothing it can do for me. This may seem like most shocking intellectual dishonesty ; and that I should allow such considerations to influence my definition may be

regarded as destroying the worth of that definition. But let me put it another way ; there are sad people in the Churches who have a weary struggle with their sins ; all day long they are at battle with themselves and their glooms and failures. One cannot say that they are not saved ; at any rate, they are being saved. They, many of them, have the inward witness ; they daily rejoice in the love of God, and in all the splendour of the Divine favour, they know themselves not forsaken. But these same people are daily in a great strife of aspiration, of desire, and of a most passionate longing for holiness. Has the Church nothing for them, and have they no claim on the services of the servants of God ? The strife of the heart after holiness is the longest and the most lonely known to man. Dates are not often of any significance ; crises are not common ; it is by the slow winning of the widening way that most of the saints attain to the best that is given to them. The tears, the gracious tears, that are shed by the longing souls who have not attained to the measure of the stature, and are seeking all the day long—has the Church nothing to say to them ?

There is something very warm and precious to my heart and to my hope in the old hymn we used to sing about saints being ‘ His peculiar care.’ Is there nothing to be said for the warmth of my heart and hope, and is there nothing to be said for the point of view of the hymn ? There are treasures in the Book of Psalms that we are forgetting, and that we shall want back

again, one of these days. It is called 'coddling saints' in our time, and it is supposed to be a miserable business, making ministers a peculiar special kind of wet nurse to spiritual babies. Oh, I have seen the riot of the good soldier who could not bear to think of himself as a wet nurse. Have not we all heard the resounding cheers when the fine point has been sufficiently made, and the sickly saints have been thrown to the wolves? It is not so in the Book of Psalms, and it is not so in the heart of God. A trifle of exaggeration is a pleasant way of destroying something that does not exist. Call comforting 'coddling' and what becomes of comforting? Of course it is at once among the things that stink in the nostrils of the brave. But I have known when it has been one of the most necessary things in the world to comfort some poor soul—and one of the most difficult. I take up the Epistles of Paul, and he seems to think that it is one of the chief duties of the Church to pray, and it is one of the most passionate and pathetic of his desires that they should pray, much, for him. And when we come to the substance of the prayers, it is found that they are all of them, or nearly all of them, in every phrase and portion, concerned in the strife of the saints after God and in the hunger of the soul for holiness. I have often been struck by the fact that Paul says so little of what the saints should do for the world, and so much of what God is willing to do for the saints. He is not always hounding them on, and telling them about the duty

they have to the wicked, and the pagan world. He takes all that for granted ; and the wonderful thing is that he *could* take it for granted. I think he can take that for granted, because he does not for one moment believe that it is the alone mission of the Church to seek and to save the lost.

I have been told that the best way to find holiness is to seek to bring another to holiness. It is a very beautiful way, and a way that will work for many minds, I have no doubt ; but I have not found that it worked with me. I have also found other men, and more women, in the like tribulation. To me it is not by any means a sufficient guidance. Worship and meditation and stillness serve me better. But still there are those who, when I have objected these things, have blown me away with testimony that I have not sought hard enough to bring others to holiness, and that, if I had done this as it ought to have been done, then would my peace have been as a river and my righteousness as the waves of the sea. Well, one cannot argue with a prophet. I do not find any liberty in acting on the predictions of the prophets ; if their word does not come true, so much has been lost, and lost because I had leaned too fondly on the understanding of another. If a man will show me that there are some reasons, and will give me his witness, and humbly consent that this is all he knows, I can understand and appreciate ; but I have a horror of the future tense when used as a refuge for passion

or pride. Besides, the prophets do not always confirm their own word. I have found men who had spent all on the seeking of others, and they have become a kind of moss-troopers in the service of the Lord, dragoons of the Kingdom, with all the force and splendour famous among dragoons, and with some of the other things also. No heart that knew them could but love them for their works' sake ; all bore witness to their devotion, self-sacrifice, enthusiasm—boundless success ; but far above them shone a fairer ideal ; one saw some better thing. If there is one thing that testifies of the Lord, and of the work of His Spirit in the heart of man, is it not the frank humility that with utter innocence, cannot recognize any wonderful thing as having been done, not one in a thousand, and not any that is famous? One might be pardoned if, groping blindly after precious things, a seeker stumbles, somewhat, and has to handle, perhaps not softly enough ; but to be *absorbed* in work, even for God, and in the bringing of men to Him, induces sometimes a spirit of compromise, of impatience, of intolerance, of worldliness in the secret places of the soul, and of trusting in the things done. True, work will not give the weeds time or strength to grow, but I am seeking not to kill weeds ; rather to plant and nourish the flowers.

I had perhaps better leave that : it is a field my oxen find difficult to plough, and I penitently confess there is much to be said for those who live by work.

One looks at them with envy, and they are a perpetual reproach. But I have a feeling that there is a place for the saints—for the merely ornamental saints, if you so like to name them. There are good men and holy women who have no great sphere in the activities of the Church, who are to the Lord as the dearest and the best of His children. I do not know how it is with others, but I have found some of the lonely ones the most inspiring, and also the most intimate with the Eternal—‘far ben,’ as we say in Scotland. The most wonderful woman I ever met, I met in the Parish poor-house, when I was in Keighley. Though blind and old, I think she had the most beautiful face I ever saw, and she had by far the most entire joy and confidence in God. All that she had suffered at the hands of deceivers I cannot tell ; it was one of the most distressing histories I have ever heard ; and she was a lady born and nourished. But there she lay, upon a straw pallet, in a dismal house of sorrow, and there was not less than heaven all about her. Her words come back to me again and again, and, when her words fail, the savour of her memory is more to me than the memory of any other woman I have met—save one. She has stifled many a sigh, has encouraged me to endure, shown me the victory that overcometh the world, and has revealed to me the grace of forgiveness, these thirty years now, and she will do to the end. I have found sometimes that in a lonely village the one that kept the cause alive never went to chapel. In a sick

chamber she had to tarry and pray ; out from the lonely chamber there went a power more and greater than all the sermons that were preached. It was difficult to understand from any point but one, and yet there was the fact, and you knew that the sick woman was the saving of the cause. Many will be able to confirm my witness. Somehow, these seemed to have a peculiar intimacy ; things were told to them that we coarser ones could not hear, and God honoured their weakness beyond all our strength.

My point is that there should be some who are what these lonely ones are, and that they should go out and in among us. Cannot God do for an active and a healthy man, in business, what He did for the saint in the poorhouse? Cannot it be that there shall come all the graces that are to be found in the lonely chamber, and that these graces shall be given to one who is in the fullness of strength, and in the freedom of all service? I am sure that it would not be that their opportunity was the less because there was a going in and out among us. We need men and women who carry their own breeze, as was said of Blackie. It may be only an atmosphere, only the reminiscence of their secret hour, the haunting of their fellowship, and the benediction that has begun to dwell in their face. But if they make the contribution of these things, they will be the greatest of all our human resources. I want to see men and women who challenge and accuse our worldliness by their very tones,

and who by their gracious vision and their solemn spiritual youth and joy 'allure to brighter worlds and lead the way.' If we had twelve legions of these angels distributed among us there would be something to come to church for, even if it were only to look on them and be ashamed; there would then be something for the poets, and something more for the sceptical, and most of all would there be for the sad-hearted. I do not know how we are going to produce these by mere activities, and I cannot tell how we are going to grow them if the alone mission of the Church is to seek and to save the lost. I cannot consent that such men are the gift of God, sheer out of His will, and disregarding human conditions. We can grow them; if we will, we can do more—we can grow thus ourselves. Could we not, with no slackening of our love for them that are without, love a little more tenderly those that are within? Is it not possible that the solitary souls who are troubled to get to the Home of their hearts, and to find grace, apostolic joy, and victory as of the first days—is it not possible that they deserve something, and that the Church might help them more than it does?

IV

OF PASTORAL VISITATION

TWO or three books I have read recently have stirred my thought about pastoral visitation. It is plain there is no right on the part of any to talk much on this subject who has not worked rather hard at it. For that reason, and for no other, first let me say a word or two about my own habits in this direction. It has been my effort, an effort in which I have not been altogether without success, to visit my folk, every family, three or four times a year. One here and there, doubtless, has been forgotten, slipped out of the record or passed over ; it may be through preoccupation or carelessness I have sinned. But three or four times a year has been my anxious desire and habit. As to the sick, it is impossible to give any account of the way they have been visited ; circumstances vary, and the necessities of the sick admit of no rules, as they admit of no excuse on the part of the pastor. The same is true of those who are in trouble. It has been my habit, too, to keep a record of every visit, and to carry the record about with me when I have gone forth ; so that

I could bring out the book and give the date when there was a charge of forgetfulness, as not seldom happens. I set this down not for any other sign than the sign that I have honestly attempted the work and the duty. It is not possible to judge any man in the matter of pastoral visitation ; it is not wise to say that each should visit his members so many times, or that he should give so much of his strength to it. Men differ, as neighbourhoods differ, and there are men who have no call in this direction, who have no gifts, and whose visits carry with them not much that the household desires. It is not always the fault of the visitor, and it may chance that he can serve the good cause in a better way than by going from house to house. But I was brought up under the strict rule and discipline of those who think that pastoral visitation is the first thing and the last thing of all ministerial duty ; and the bringing-up has sunk in. It has cost me many a weary hour, many a bitter accusation, and some waste of time ; but the duty I have recognized, and tried not to fail, though there have been places where the multiplicity of other duties in the circuit made the ideal impossible.

Now, in the second place, I want to say I do not believe in the old adage that a house-going minister makes a church-going people. I have had it flung at me times without number, and when it has not been flung at me it has been flung at other folk, and it has also been enunciated as a solemn axiom times without

number. But it is one of those sayings that must be tested by facts, by experience. It does not matter that Dr. Chalmers said it, or who said it ; does it work out so ? I have not found that it does. I have heard the old and famous congregations of the old and famous times accounted for by this maxim. But the other day I was put to a pause. I was visiting a good old man, one famous and revered in the history of the West Riding Methodism. Before I went, he said, ' Well, are you going to do as the old preachers did ? ' I said, ' What did the old preachers do ? ' ' They took the Book, and they offered prayer.' ' But,' said I, ' was it not an embarrassment, sometimes, when they gave the visitation so formal and rigorous a line ? ' ' No,' he said. ' Why ? ' ' Because *they never came !*' I was astounded ; and before I took the Book I had it out with my friend. He insisted that his word was true, that the old preachers ' never came,' and that when they *did* come, if the bull may be pardoned, it was to see the good man of the house in the regard of some duty or some collection. It was another of my notions clarified.

Of recent years I have done more of this work than ever I have done before ; since I have come here I have gone abroad more than ever, and I have not seen many great congregations present at worship ; and those I have visited most have *not* been those who have come most frequently. I was talking the other day with a brother who does a good deal of visitation, on

his own behalf, in the matter of a Bible Class in which he works like a brick. He complained of the same thing. He told me of case after case where there was most faithful and solemn promise, week after week, and still the same vacant place and the same affable consent the next time he met his lost sheep. There are those who will say anything to get rid of you ; and there are others who are meaning it all the time, and never get beyond that stage. I heard an old Yorkshireman say once that when he awoke in the morning ' the bed pulled and he pulled,' and the whole issue depended upon whether he or the bed could pull the stronger. There is a good deal of that in the world, and no one knows the weakness of his good resolutions until the bed ' pulls ' on a Sunday morning. Then a thousand and one cares meet the careful person, and, unless there is something more than the recollection that the preacher called to see you, you will not call to see him. It is easy to understand, and I judge no man ; only it irks me, when this platitude kindles upon any man's lip--that a house-going minister makes a church-going people. I do not know that the worship on the Sabbath *ought* to rest upon such a relation ; and, if there is simply a going to church because the minister will be round if you do not, it is a poor business. Even if one goes to please the minister, and to return his kindness, it is not a very much better business. So I am not inclined to build too much on visitation as getting folk to church.

What, then? Should one give over visiting because the folk do not come to church? If a man can do that it explains many things, and shows, perhaps, why they did not come to church. So far as I can see I ought to go because I want to see the folk, to see them, and not exactly to see them in the church, because my heart is toward them in affection, with some solid interest in knowing how they do. The other ways of looking upon the duty of pastoral visitation are mean and insufficient. Unless I really *want* to see them, and to know how they do, I had better stop away; they are sure to find out the lurking incompetence. If I go simply to bring them, to make the congregation bigger, they will resent being treated as a commodity, as leaves for my Vallombrosa. It falls out, therefore, that there may be a hundred visits paid some months, and scarcely will it once be noticed that there is such a thing as the church. I was told the other day my visit had been very much enjoyed, because I had 'not talked shop.' I was told, too, that I was regarded with all the more favour because I had said nothing at all about the prayer meeting and the leaders' meeting. He was a good man, yet I did not at first take it as any commendation. What was I there for? But, as we talked about interesting things, and some of the most solemn things of life and faith, I had forgotten all about the prayer meeting and the last leaders' meeting. As I thought it over I tried to comfort my sore heart and to lull my clamorous accuser. We all of us like to

think we have kept the tradition, and I was not sure I had done well when such a thing could be said. There is the fact, however, and I do not think it was without significance. It does not seem to me good to go round as a sort of whipper-in, herding them into the House of God by hook and by crook, and with a good deal of both. If they do not *want* to worship God it is little that they wish to return a compliment. We are coming to realities, and I am inclined to think they *are* glad to see the preacher at all times, but they do not recognize any relation between seeing the preacher and going to church, and I am bound to say that something of the same blindness has begun to afflict me.

Still, I must go. If I do not my heart will have dried up, and the love of my kind, to which I have vowed myself, in the service of the gospel, will be wanting of the better part. A good many are able to explain all by the lack of visitation. It is odd how they manage to do it, but still they do. I have been reading the recollections of William Jay, published by his son Cyrus after the death of his father. They are not very pleasant reading in places, but they are very interesting reading in all places, and for an old Bath minister they are fascinating. But it seems William Jay did not visit.

‘Mr. Jay, in his autobiography, in alluding to pastoral visitation, and that complaints had been made against him on the score of his neglect of pastoral visitation, after declaring that no little of this neglect was voluntary with him, and therefore did not affect

his mind, goes on to state the several reasons why he could not be a pastoral visitor in the full sense of the word. He had begun his career young ; he had four services a week at home, besides calls abroad ; his congregation extended over the whole of the large city ; his place of residence exposed him to many interruptions ; he was necessarily engaged to visit strangers who came to Bath for their health, away from their usual pious helps, and he, moreover, was an author of much acceptance, whereby he was able to disseminate the truths of the gospel beyond the narrow precincts of his chapel. Knowing that he was well employed, he felt persuaded that he was better promoting the welfare of his people and the public in his study than, to use his own language, “ in gadding about without an aim, and wasting time in idle intercourse and nursery talk ”. Now, that is a most illuminating passage, and it explains some of the difficulties that came upon the great preacher in his old age, when he died, if the word of his son is to be taken, of a broken heart. But I do not think there is any sufficient vindication of the lack of pastoral visitation.

Mr. Collier was speaking on this matter in Sheffield once, and he told how one family, in his early ministry, wanted him to come and see them I know not how many times in the month ; he was not disposed to oblige them, since he discovered they only wanted the news of the town and of the circuit. Then he told them how they had not paid their class money, and

asked them for it. He took the Book and read and prayed, and soon found that they did not expect him with so much regularity as they had previously desired. Mr. Collier is a braver man than I am, and has more wisdom. He put his finger on a weak spot in 'pastorals,' as the Americans call it.

But there is something in the duty of pastoral visitation that ministers to the unity of the Church. The preacher who practises it can bring the rich to the poor, and the poor to the rich, in many noble ways by simply telling them one of another, and letting sorrows and dispositions be known. I like to tell a rich man of a poor man's heroism, and quite as well do I like to tell a poor man of a rich man's kindness and of his entire humanity. It sows benevolence, and so you can preach a much better sermon by the fireside than is sometimes possible in the pulpit, and from a much more difficult text than most people dare take in the pulpit. But all depends upon whether one really loves the folk, not the Methodists, and the good class-goers, and the respectable and comely, but the folk, the rank humanity, and the odd humanity, and the wicked man also. If that is there the getting them into the church is not the main consideration. One goes to them, then, not because it is a duty, but a necessity of your own nature. You wonder how the man is getting on, how the wife is prospering with her new kneading machine in which she has been enticed to venture by some canvasser or another. You have heard that Tommy

has been taken to the hospital, and that the doctor has been at the house. It is not a matter of the Church at all ; it is a matter of sheer humanity. The man who believes in the description of the inhabitants of these islands that satisfied and comforted Thomas Carlyle has no business to go from house to house. But the lover of his kind and a lover of the infinite variety of life and of humanity cannot stay away.

V

CARDINAL NEWMAN

WHEN I heard of the new biography of Cardinal Newman I made myself ready. The book was one I desired to have, and I must enjoy it, too. So I set to work to read my way up to it. Three volumes were necessary to secure the air and the flavour. I read, therefore, first the *Apologia*, and then the two volumes of *Anglican Letters*, edited by Miss Mozley. The house I love best has a porch to it. I sat and sunned myself there as a boy, and cannot forget. Of course I had read them both before, but I desired to refresh my memory. It was some time before I could find opportunity for the biography itself; and it was still a little longer before I could lay my hands on the book. Now I have done with it, and want to set down one or two reflections. I will make them as general as I can.

It is a pathetic gift to be very religious and to be very profound. If one wants happiness most of all, and a comfortable passage across the narrow sea, it is not the best thing to have within you a restless desire for the

infinite, and a mighty deep of emotion, of insight, and of vision. The great natures are immeasurably sad. They have a sad history, which is not so much to be wondered at in a world like this. We think of Shakespeare as merry, as one who wrinkled care beguiles ; but there is another side and an awful one. Bacon does not seem to be sad ; he is wistful, but not sad ; and he easily takes another turn. Men of affairs are not to be counted in this reckoning ; they have a band of music always marching round them, and there are echoes in the heart.

But Newman is my instance. There surely was not in the last hundred years, in these islands, one who had so much to haunt, to startle, and waylay. He lived in strife, and was a man of war from his youth up ; and the war was always about invisibles ; he seemed to feel all heaven and all earth hanging on the slightest distinctions. I do not say there was nothing eternal in Newman ; he was all eternal ; he fought for great issues but always standing in the wrong place, and using terms that were like the practical man's music—only echoes. He could not let the world wag. He tried again and again, and said within himself that he would keep silence, yea, even from good words ; and to-morrow he is at it again, or panting to be at it, and at it near the heart of the malice of men. He was happy when fighting, but had the bad luck always to be wounded most deeply in the house of his friends ; and that because they opined he was giving away the ark,

and wantonly letting go their birthright and his own. He was a mystery to all the owls and sparrows, and tom-tits and cuckoos—this bird of paradise ; and they had a way of chattering among themselves, a way this bird of paradise felt to be impertinent, and wonderful, and excruciating. He tried to take it meekly ; and his meekness is just one of the quaintest things in all history. Infinitely sad, infinitely happy, and infinitely noble is Newman. But he had no skin. Your shallow man and bad man have too much skin, are nothing but skin, and so are happy—happy as chanticleer.

No Church is any better than it ought to be, and the oldest is the worst. You see here the secret history of two great Churches, the Anglican and the Roman. You see how they loved their greatest, and the way they each understood and valued. It is a brave thing to print books like these two volumes, so portly and bodeful and bitter, to the discerning eye. The Churches must have in them some essence, some antiseptic, or they would never be able to lift their faces in the sunlight any more. I take it, the Church has little or nothing to do with the history here written of famous men. The Churches, thank God, are not made up of famous men, and great leaders, but of humble folk who say their prayers, and look up to eminent men and admire them, afar off, until the tale is told ; and then they are dead, most of these possessors of God's hidden gift, and of His eternal treasure. They are dead ; and a new race has come, a race that knows its leaders are

better than the old ones ; it reads about the old ones, and thanks heaven for better times and better men. So it has gone on, it would appear, for about two thousand years. Are we near the end? The pathos of it is intolerable. We none of us know what is going on, and it is just as well ; we are all the happier and holier. But the Church is not the sport of men, and is not the instrument or the foundation of men ; the Church is of God ; and wonderfully He keeps it burning and shining in the night.

I have read biographies of great leaders of the saints until I wonder how there are any who have love left. But still we must not make them worse than they are. They only come into view when they are doing brave things, and defending the faith and managing affairs. We do not see them at other times and in better activities. David wrote the fifty-first Psalm not for you and me. He wrote that for his lonely soul ; and these Davids have their fifty-first Psalms ; only they are not written in any book on earth. Some of them need half a dozen Psalms of David's sort, and I hope they had them. There is no Church quite so heedless as is the Romish Church. It is heedless of all save of itself, and its vain and hollow house. I have met Catholics I loved ; but her I love not, and cannot and dare not. ' I will build My Church,' said One, and none but He could build, amid so many mutinies and earthquakes, jobberies and envies. And then—the history of them. I doubt if it would not be well to decree there

shall never be any more biographies of great leaders. But still biographies are a needful witness ; they hasten the morning when freedom shall raise ' her bold and beautiful brow.'

If you live long enough you will see your desire upon your enemies. About that I am perfectly confident ; it is one of the foundations of my faith—if one lives long enough one is sure to see one's desire upon one's enemies. Newman lived long enough, and he is going on now to take out all the rest, all that was lacking upon the earth. The first volume is in shadow. It is an instructive fact that he is past sixty years of age when the volume leaves him. There has been a honeymoon in the Romish Church ; it has been a very blessed one ; then comes swooping and crawling all the sorrow and the drabness of discovery. Not much more opportunity can come to him. He has been somebody ; and now he is nobody, only a great strange beast Cardinal Wiseman has caught and desires to show in the land, for praise of the prowess of his hunting. Newman was very proud, and he did not like the goose-step in his cage. He has to go to Rome, and there be a little boy at school ; and Rome is not kind to its little boys at school. But in the end he sees the utter confusion of all this folly, and comes out into the light with a touching splendour. Had he died before Kingsley gave him his chance he would have been judged a disappointed man—one who had gone hence to his confusion. But after that he is one of the heroes of the race ; and his

lightest word is as the word of prophecy. So all the reviewers declare. He saw his desire upon his enemies. I do not say he did not *change* his desire before he saw it. He changed it often ; it grew softer and sweeter at every change, until at the last his desire was nothing but a blessing, or that they should fall into the loving hands of God. It takes a great deal of living to get into the way of having a right desire upon our enemies ; but living brings it, even in this world, for those who have a spark of grace. Old Time is an old fellow, and a great thief. He steals more fire than anything ; but he steals no good thing out of the hand of the righteous.

Great excitement about fine points is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. One of the wearinesses of these two volumes is that they have to say a great deal about dead issues, drier than the bones of those who now sleep after the slaughter about the gates of Troy. Again and again I have failed to find my interest held, just because there was so fine an edge upon the controversy, and it was so vast a beating of the air. I have grumbled and pitied the biographer who had to give us so much dust to eat. Frankly, there are long tracts nobody will enjoy, save a devotee who can take pleasure with parched peas in his boots, all for the love of famous men and famous times. But the excitement was tremendous in the hearts of those who did contend. The accent and the issue, to the furthest degree, and the effect of the tone, and the nice calculation of how

Newman's writings would affect generations yet unborn, and the Patagonian Mission, all this misleads the cunning habit of the serene ecclesiastic. I have taken pleasure in some of the stories of a Pope who took snuff conveniently, and convincingly, and of one who, when kissing the toe, took the Pope by the foot so resolutely as well nigh to throw the good old man on his back. But nobody gets excited about the Pope's snuff, nor about the bad manners of the pilgrim who gripped his foot for a kiss. The pity of it is, they get very hot about things that are not half so important as the snuff and the kiss, and policies that had not half so much weight in them. To get down to the dust-bin is the best way of knowing how much you owe to the fresh air and the wide world. One cannot give too much gratitude to life and to vision, showing us the real things and the points of vital value. So much of Rome is all about nothing, that Rome has a great hold upon those who are not able to do without a pretty liberal dose of similitudes. But get it into books like this, and it is like the white ash you find, left in the woods or on the wild moor, a month after the picnic.

A great man has a fountain of tears. I never could like dry-eyed heroes. Somebody called Wellington the Iron Duke. It was the worst disservice they ever did him. I suppose he was so named from an iron vessel that bore his name, and the fancy of the land saw the great opportunity—so he goes to futurity sailing in a ship that all the world has forgotten, and they say he is

the Iron Duke. But duke or doctor is all the better for having tears ; and iron should not be without tears. Newman was iron ; he was sentiment, too. He had curious ways, however. I have felt there was a cruel strain in him, as I have read in these five volumes. He could be bitter as gall and cold as marble, when some among us would have been nothing less than a fountain of waters. But he wrote the *Apologia*, crying all the time. I suspect there was something more than sorrow in those plentiful tears. The book is as great in emotion as it is in grace and sweetness. But the tears are suggested, not seen. To read of him as leaning over the gate at Littlemore, and crying like a broken-hearted child, an old and shabby man stricken dumb by tears, and careless of all who went that way, is as softening and as wholesome a passage as you may chance upon in one book in ten thousand. Littlemore is a place few will be inclined to shed many tears over, at any greeting of its low pastures and dank air. But to Newman it was not so. It was the place of his lonely battle, of his last hours, when he was on his death-bed so far as the Anglican Church was concerned. He felt it ; he would have been a much less man if he had not felt it very deeply indeed. He was afraid of beautiful scenery, from his youth up, and would not let his heart into it. But there were other things ; he kissed the snapdragon on the wall when he left Oxford ; when he left Littlemore he went about kissing a good many of the corners and cornices. He gave to outward things what might have

been better bestowed upon persons, when some of them went short. But he was a very great man ; and I must still beg the pardon of some of my friends who cannot understand why the name he bears is so precious to me. He is no dearer to me for the reading of these two volumes ; indeed, I think he is just a little more remote, and a trifle lower on the horizon. But he was a great man, and greatest of all and holiest in his sermons preached at St. Mary's.

VI

POLITICIANS AND PARSONS

I SAW a photograph the other day of Mr. Roosevelt, the descriptive title of which was 'The Colonel in Action !' There stood the famous American with feet firmly planted, and legs apart ; his arms were lifted high above his head, and the whole face of him was rugged, flaming with energy and passion. Never have I seen a man with more of the fire and fury I would covet to have when preaching the gospel. He was preaching politics, or, may be, he was preaching something that had only a little to do with politics ; but he was preaching like a tornado, and feeling like one, too. As I looked at the picture I began to wonder if any man, nowadays, dare get into such a tempest as that inside a pulpit, or on one of the rostrums of the Church. He seemed like an erupting volcano. It is supposed that there is no sphere for passion, and for the frenzy of victorious conviction, now, in religion ; that we have found out some better way. I very much doubt if we really *have* found out any better way. It is suggestive that some of the greatest political forces of

the time are returning to the old style of vivid, jubilant, and flaming energy in utterance. Anyhow, this seems to be so in America, from all the pictures I have seen. I heard Gladstone in Midlothian, and it is futile to say to me that Gladstone would not be listened to in our day. No man among us, even now, could stand up, stolid and indifferent, against that impetuous torrent of mind.

I have been away from home, and talking with a man I have known for years, in a remote way ; but since I talked with him last he has found a work and a calling in politics. He is a member of our Church, and a very loyal and convinced member. I need not go into that. What I want a word or two upon is a reminiscence he gave me, touching a meeting of a committee of political organizers, when a campaign was being planned, and speakers selected. My friend had one speaker in his mind, and was sure that speaker would help the good cause. He began to recommend his man. Then he got a surprise ; there was present one of the most experienced builders of the towering politics of our age, one highly skilled in framing arrangements and directing movements. When the name came up, he immediately vetoed the proposal, and gave his reasons. They were as follows : ‘ He will never do at all ; if he comes he will speak with amazing eloquence ; you will all be captivated ; but the result will be nothing at all. He is just like a parson, you listen to him with a glow, and then you go away and

cannot remember a single thing he has said. Now, what we want is a man who can give us arguments and explanations that the common folk can understand and carry away. We want one who will give something that can be used again, something all who hear will talk over in the home, on the trams and trains and in the workshops.' Truly, the organizer spoke even as an organizer ; he disliked and distrusted all that could not be organized, and saw its weak points.

This does not seem to agree with the photograph I have seen of the 'Colonel.' A man may say a rememberable thing when in the majesty of his emotions and in the torrent of his words. I very much doubt, however, if in that style of utterance he will leave a deposit of arguments, neat and handy, for the retailer of second-hand truth. But the great disturbance of my mind centres round the accusation made against preachers and taken up so neatly, to point a moral, to clinch an argument. The political manager had a very definite notion of the outcome of sermons ; he assumed that all agreed with him—you went away from the sermon and could remember nothing at all, nothing that would be of use for instructing or convincing another. The political manager was a man versed in preachers, I understand. I asked my friend for his own opinion, and he was not slow to give it ; his opinion was that the politician had hit the nail on the head. He told me he could never use anything he had heard in a sermon ; or, at any rate, not use it

for the instruction of another. He could put the points of a good many political speeches he had heard ; but he found it difficult to put the points of a sermon. Nay, it was impossible to *find* any point. He liked the sermon while it lasted ; it was pleasant and instructive at the moment, and then it was gone, like a dream when one awaketh. 'Now,' said he ; 'when I have read anything in a leader or an article, when I have heard anything in a speech, that seems to me good, I like, on the train or in company, to work round the conversation, to approach the subject, and then I use what has impressed me. So I try to help on the good cause. But I never get any help in *this* way for my Christian work. Why don't I? Would it not be possible for our ministers to remember the possibilities of this kind of propaganda? Laymen are warming to the work ; but we want something fresh and keen and to the point ; it should be your business to charge us every Sunday, and to send us out, ready, with the right words, full of the subject—sword in hand.'

What was I to say to my friend ? I could but thank him for the candid way he had taken with a preacher. He told me all their preachers were first-rate fellows, hard workers, and for the world he would not have them wounded. He loved them, and I know he has proved his love in substantial ways ; but this one thing they did *not* do for him ; and he had not found any preacher who seemed able to do it, or who had so much as been aware of the possibilities of the case. Is

there anything in the contention of my friend? Well, I am sorry if folk cannot carry away my sermons; I have my doubts whether they do. It is easy to lay the blame on the listener; to say, petulantly, he did not give attention, or that he was defective in intelligence. But all that is nothing to the point. We have to take men as they are, and to seize such opportunity as they give. If my hearer is a poor hand at understanding, *that* is the reason why I should be a good hand at explaining; and, if he cannot remember, it is my business to put so many hooks into the truth, and those hooks so sharp, that he cannot shake all off or be impenetrable to every one. Sometimes I have ventured to get round to the subject, with a view to finding out if I *had* got into the mind. I daresay some have thought I had a rather vile relish for a compliment. But *that* was not my reason. I like to look at the target, that is all; the man with the gun takes up his glasses or there is one who signals. There being nobody to signal, I take up my glasses as carefully as may be. It is one of the difficulties of the preacher that he can seldom make quite sure if he has done anything. He is supposed to leave it to 'that day,' to 'cast his bread upon the waters,' and I know not what; but by no means must he be inquisitive. So he may become indifferent to his work, because he must cultivate good taste. I know there is a danger both ways; but the danger of ignorance is difficult to exaggerate. Anyhow, I have plaguey doubts about these sermons

of mine, as to how far they are understood, carried away. I have heard remarks far worse than some of the missiles our fathers had to face ; they hurt worse, and left a more dangerous deposit than ' long-neglected, age-affected, well-directed eggs.' All of which points to the fact that I fail to make myself understood, sometimes worst understood of all when I have had the warmest emotions and the most tempestuous moments.

I sometimes wonder if anybody now reads John Howe, particularly *The Blessedness of the Righteous*. I have been looking up that noble treatise once more, and am sure there is nothing better worth reading at this time, and nothing that would more surely quicken all the vitalities of our faith and love. Well, there is a passage Howe quotes from some pagan author bearing on the matter in hand. He refers to ' A like case, as if sheep when they were feeding should present their shepherds with the very grass itself, which they have cropped, and show how much they had eaten.' We are all aware this is not what shepherds desire. What they look for, of the sheep, is that they shall become good, sound, healthy sheep, and get ready for the market—I know that figure does not hold, very far, and that it is a sorry thing to imagine, at the end of all their feeding, only mutton, after the butcher's knife. But there is some analogy. I want to see, not sheep who will bring me a little pile of grass, and congratulate me on putting it in their way, but sheep who think nothing about the grass save as something they relish

and consume and digest. I shall know by the growth how they have fared, and what use they have made of my shepherding. The suggestion my friend made looks too much like the sheep bringing the grass to the feet of one another. That is not the main business ; sheep, so employed, may be very philanthropic, but it is in a very sheepish way. Of course, a man may take the truth he has learned, and make it his own ; he does not seek it for the good of another only ; he wants to use it himself, and *then* pass it on. Truth is not at all like grass, and man is much better than a sheep. John Howe's illustration, at first, appears to work against the contention from which we started ; but, if it be considered, it does nothing of the kind, rather supports it. But is there not something in the faintness of attention given to most sermons ?

I see somebody has been saying in the *Guardian*, not to the praise and glory of John Wesley, that John Wesley complained of Butler's *Analogy* that it ' would convert nobody.' I do not know where the words have been gleaned, and I do not quite think the reader, if he *did* read those words from the pen of John Wesley, gave sufficient attention to the context. John Wesley said many better things than that about Butler's *Analogy*, and gave it the praise due to power and genius. Great reader as he was, and busy as he was, he knew a good book when he saw one, and was perfectly well aware that Butler's *Analogy* would not convert a Kingswood collier, and that from no fault in the book.

Just the same may be true of some of the sermons we all of us hear preached. I remember once hearing Dr. Fairbairn, and when I came out I had not the slightest notion of what he had been driving at. I was comforted by hearing the United States Consul in Edinburgh say that others might have been able to gather a little, but *he* could not understand, even in the slightest degree. But Dr. Fairbairn was not accountable for my 'state of majestic imbecility.' To return to Butler, Dr. Lightfoot used to say that he sometimes thought if he were allowed to live one hour only of his past life over again, he would choose a Butler lesson under Prince Lee. But Prince Lee was much of a failure when he became a Bishop, and that in the North. What we carry away has been conditioned by what we brought. If you take a sieve to the river, the sieve may be a little cleaner for being in the river a minute or two; but you will not be able to water your garden, nor to quench the thirst of another, out of the sieve.

The sum of the whole matter appears to be that our laymen are longing for a teaching ministry. I think they are right, and it is a very healthy sign. They know the fundamental facts of their own religious consciousness, and are right in their relations to the divine; or, at least, many of them are. But they want to be able to talk to those who are without, and to talk in a language those who are without are able to understand. Too much of the speech of the pious

smells fusty, and is only parrot talk. Men have no interest in phrases, and will have less as the times move forward. A not very brilliant student, writing an examination paper on Oliver Cromwell, concluded his essay by informing his examiner that 'Cromwell's last days were embittered by a book that threatened to kill him.' Now I have a notion that a good many of us are suffering from the malady that embittered the last days of the great Oliver. We have a sad fear that sermons are meant to kill us, and particularly big sermons, difficult to understand.

VII

THE NEW TEACHING

I DO not mean what is known as the 'New Theology.' One wonders, when one reads the books I have in mind, if they *be* theology, or what they are. It is not possible to teach religion without teaching theology, and so I suppose this is theology, but it is not of the sort so many object to ; most readers will not recognize it as theology at all. What folk object to is not theology, but a certain sort of remote instruction on abstruse themes, detached from things in general and difficult to understand. Most of it, to them, seems musty and antiquated. They have heard it from the beginning, just the same words, and now and again the same collocation of words, and they are very weary ; it means nothing ; they are not interested. Now the teaching I have in mind has the dew of the morning upon it ; has no long words and no circuitous methods, does not balance and ' differ,' until you are bewildered ; it manages this by not trying to say everything, and by holding close to experience. If any man turns away from the new teaching because of these things,

he must turn away from life because he found a food distress him in the past. Whatever delicacy you take it is still food, and nourishes in the old way. All foods are made up of certain essential compounds about which the chemists have more information than I. All the good things that comfort and inform the mind, that strengthen the will and the hope, deserve the name of theology, and get it from the discerning. Because the cook you lived under was a bad one so long, it is not wise either to do all your own cooking or to defy the art.

I have two books mainly in mind ; but there is a breath on most books that deal with religion in our time. The first is *Christ's Message of the Kingdom*, by Professor A. G. Hogg, and is published by T. & T. Clark. It costs two shillings ; and it should take a man fifteen weeks to read it. I really do not know how any man can better spend fifteen weeks of reading-time than by the perusal of this modest little volume. It seems a long time, and one will be tempted to hurry through ; but fifteen weeks is the time the author asks, and he knows very well what he is about. I am reading it in that way, and have only done about ten of the fifteen. The fact is, the book is divided into daily 'portions,' and they are not big ones. There are also Scriptures to be read, and a summary every week. The summary deals with the past week's studies, and if the book had been all summary it would still have been one of the most important books of the last few years. But it is not all summary ; all I can say is

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that it is all gold. But in the method of weeks there is a certain madness. I know a good many readers who will toss it aside as a freak and think they know better ; the madness is theirs in that case. To tell the truth, the matter is so searching and subtle, so far-reaching and courageous, so bewildering, in places, that one needs the other twenty-three hours of the day to get one's breath back again. There is an innocence in the writer, a kind of freshness of innocence, that is all of faith, and love, and hope ; and no mood of the mind carries the understanding such lengths as does that. I never heard of Professor Hogg until I came across this book, and therein I reveal my shame ; for since I have talked about the book I have found a great many who knew Professor Hogg, and had a kind of awe of the man. But he is away in India, and is only known, or best known, by those who know India. Those of the Christian Student Movement know him ; most missionaries I have met have for him not only affection, but a bright expectation. When you do not know the man, and when the man is a recognized power among those that know, it is best to drop conceit in his presence, and to do as you are told, if you are to get the most out of him ; and quite sure I am that the best way to take this book is to take it in the arranged quantities ; it pays.

The second book is *The Nature and Purpose of Christian Society*. The writer is Mr. T. R. Glover, Fellow of St. John's College and Cambridge University

Lecturer in Ancient History. The book is published by Headley Brothers, the publishers for the Society of Friends. You get this book for one shilling, and you can read it as you please—only, take care to read it again. I got through it, going very deliberately, in a couple of hours ; quicker readers than I am would have done it in half the time. But I lingered, meditating sermons and tasting the flavour, quoting hymns to myself, and stopping to ponder and relate the word to my past reading and living. There is not much bulk, and that will please a good many ; there is plenty in it, and nobody will find out how much there *is* in it until he has given to it about the same space of time Professor Hogg asks for his book. Now, what is it all about ? Well, it is about everything that has to do with the Christian religion. But, so far as I can see, it is mainly about the Church. We are hearing a good deal, in our time, about the duty of making more of the Church. I have sometimes wondered what the Church is. I have, indeed, given a good deal of time to try and found my notions of the Church in the right place, and to keep them in the right order, and have found this rather difficult. Reading the modern teachings about the Church, I have been repelled by most, and my instincts have been disappointed by many. But here is something alive and spiritual, having little to do with ‘ orders ’ and forms, that takes no thought for traditions and the growth of the great ages ; but makes most account of the great men and the great experience.

I am not sure the ecclesiastics will welcome the book. Probably the High Church men will think it is chaotic ; and, certainly, they will desire to add to it, and so to add that the superstructure will sink through the foundations and disappear into the limbo Milton tells of. But, for all that, here is a doctrine we shall have to reckon with, and it is significant that the doctrine was set forth at the yearly meeting of the Friends. Are we going to get a revival of the Friends? Some signs look in that direction ; and they are not the worst signs of the times. Here are no machinery, no Sacraments, only the elemental necessities of life in Christ Jesus. Blessed is that man who can take out of these two books all there is for him and me.

Truly, there is a great difference between the two writers. Professor Hogg has never a touch of humour ; Mr. Glover cannot keep it out. ‘ I tried in my time to be a philosopher, but, I don’t know how, cheerfulness was always breaking in.’ So said an ancient in the days of Dr. Johnson. But Mr. Glover makes no such mistakes, touching the functions of a philosopher. It is the very joy of his heart that shines out, and the love he has for literature and for men. There is much joy, too, in Professor Hogg, but it is of the deep, still kind, has the infinite calm of India, of the strong man who has dwelt much apart. The difference in the joy of these two writers is a great matter, and should be meditated upon by those who are concerned in the variety of religious experience. Then there is a difference in the

style ; Mr. Glover has an artless freedom that moves about and captures words with an instinct and a relish, with a reminiscence of the poets and the great masters of expression, that fascinates any one who has read the literature of our great land. Professor Hogg takes no thought for these things. I do not say that Mr. Glover takes any thought for them ; they are nature to him. But the nature of Professor Hogg is different. He may have read with the passion of a lover for aught I know, but he has a desire serious and detached, a feeling of grave solemnity, of the very Lord and Master of us all, compelling him to the simplest words, going straight to the heart of the mystery. He never ventures to look aside upon human delights, casting their flickering, beautiful shade, or their rainbows of glory. There is an ease about Mr. Glover, a most delicious ease, as of one who was doing all this with his left hand, so to speak, but it is *not* his left hand ; it is his heart that speaks, his heart that teaches. This is one of the heartiest books I have ever known, and so mellow that the mellowness is half the secret of the ease. He appears to be meditating rather than teaching, and there is the very air of the Quaker meeting-house. Said Charles Lamb, ‘ I have seen faces in their assemblies upon which the dove sat visibly brooding . . . You go away with a sermon not made with hands. Every Quakeress is a lily, and when they come up in bands to their Whitsun conferences, whitening the easterly streets of the Metropolis, from all parts of the

United Kingdom, they show like troops of the shining ones.'

May I point out once more the price of these books? The two are to be had for three shillings. I am sick, sometimes, as I listen to folk who complain about the price of books. There never was a dear book. It cost more than ever you were asked to give, however much you were asked. It is a favourite subject amongst us, this subject of the price of books; we know how to mock at the foolishness of those who complain; we are able to quote Ruskin upon the price of the carpets and the wines in the cellars, or, to quote lesser men than Ruskin, on how much is spent to see a game, or for a necktie, for the cut of a coat, or a brood of chickens. It is little use, however, indulging the strain. Men who care not for good reading, and only read as a task, will always fling some excuse; the money excuse is one that appeals to many minds, and that at once. When you are taking care of your pocket you awake universal sympathy among those who chance to have a pocket. But three shillings will here be better spent than if you took an evening paper for twelve weeks. I am no enemy to any sort of reading, and now that a boy shouts the evening paper past my study window, as soon as the afternoon begins to shade the trees, I understand the appeal better than I did. But, really, one *must* have some sense of proportion, and ought not to complain about the three shillings, all at once, when we can easily spend them

in noble prodigality of halfpence, and think we have done that which it was our duty to do. I have been blamed within the last month for the counsel I have given touching books, and not long ago a very nice man showed me a book he had bought at my recommendation, and then told me, with bowed head and averted eye, he 'was much disappointed.' It is ill work, therefore, and a labour full of peril to your fame when you say, 'Buy a book, sir,' and name the book. But I name these two, and risk it. I know very well there are those who will complain and will rail, and rail at the books as well as at me. They will imagine the many better things their three shillings were once capable of. But it hurts me not that one in Cornwall and another in the Hebrides should call me 'a rascally, yea, forsooth, knave.' What *does* hurt is when I cannot find anything to praise and bless.

It is a suggestive fact that neither of these books is by a professed theologian. Just now these brethren are in a barren way of life, or most of them are. Yesterday I bought a book by a theologian of repute on a most fascinating subject ; all the fascination has gone. I will not say what the book was, but it was as stodgy as mutton cold for three days, and cut at for two. I read a good deal of it, after supper, and had one of the best night's sleep I have had for a long time, so that I did not entirely waste my half-crown. But why is this? Why are we getting all the fertile and moving books on theology from men who have spent their

time and strength in other fields, and have only written theology because they must ease a burdened heart? I do not know. Yet will not the best teaching upon God and man ever come along that line? There is a work going on. Men are thinking, and they are thinking to some effect. Happy will the day be, and bright the dreams of its evening, when we are all theologians, all have our torch, if it be but a taper—yea, only a trick of holding the taper so that the light falls in unexpected ways. I will be very thankful, too, for the children with their bits of coloured glass, playing among the candlesticks, and shouting for glee of their magic. The nor'-wester cannot blow that ever will sweep away the beauty and the brightness from companies such as these.

VIII

ON READING THE WRONG BOOKS

IT is difficult to say which are the right books, but it is not so difficult to know that some others are entirely wrong. A young man goes to College—I dare say there will be more than one, of the type I have in mind, among those who have got to College this year—and he has not been there long before he finds out that his few lavishly-loved books are all wrong. If he does not *find* it out, the ‘third year’ will tell him so, with some want of delicacy; and they will not need to use speech or language: their line will go out without either. It will come upon him in the classes, in the look he gets into the books of the other fellows. He will find out from the ruthless talk of his brethren after supper; and in his blood and bones he will feel ashamed of his old friends. Not all of them; if he has loved the right poets he will discover no new ones. Not one will he find to take a nearer place than the old familiar faces. He may hear a spark, of the brightest, rave about some name unknown to him; but he will not trouble long. Perhaps he will find that his editions of the poets are a

trifle frumpy and out of date. If he is wise, he will not be ashamed of that, but will love the mother of his emotions, attired as she was when first he lay upon her breast, and took his glimpses into heaven. It may chance when he grows old, and his eyes begin to dim, he will want another type ; but the first love is very dear to me. Not long ago, one moved me much by a certain tone in his words when he spoke of ' my old Wordsworth.' When I saw the book it was a quaint, cheap copy ; but it had been consecrated, read, and loved. There is a sanctity about such a book. I have never parted from my first copy. It holds a name, and it holds memories of the early morning, of the first light and the first wind that comes with the first dawn. Why should I part with it ?

A man never quite knows how little his old books are worth until he tries to sell them ; and, if they be theological, then he learns it would have been indeed better to have trusted in ' intelligible forms of ancient poets,' than in ' the fair humanities of old religion.' The week before he has had to spend with some faith, in order to get a proper supply of books for his class work ; and now he comes to sell ! The discovery of the difference is poignant, and his faith in booksellers receives a shock. The fact is, if he had a bundle of waste paper in his hand he would not so embarrass the seller of books who must not buy. He cannot offer any price at all. Sometimes the pathetic or indignant look

on the face of the boy will constrain the man to waste all his profit of the week before in comforting the heart of a future customer. But if that heart requires comforting too often, in order to live and pay his way, the bookseller must refuse any further tillage.

Perhaps the last desperate discovery of all is when you find your books have given you a tongue different from the tongue usually spoken in the company you now frequent. I heard a man describe the Lord Jesus, not long ago, with great unction, as 'a living reality.' I knew at once he was a hundred years behind the times. Perhaps he was only fifty years too late—but even fifty years is a very long absence. Fifty years ago that was the way to put it ; when so put, it seemed to smite. But now it does not affect anybody, save with a sense of weariness. What do I mean ? I do not mean there is anything wrong with the matter expressed, or that the age has travelled beyond it in the slightest degree. I only mean that, so to say, the thing attempted to be said is reminiscent, autobiographical, not in tune, and just a little too obvious. You take up some of the old books, and they are for ever new ; some of them are full of a vigour not appropriated yet. They were of the primal impulses, and so never grow remote. But, for the most part, in old books the tone is finished and done with ; there are few chords with which that particular tone harmonizes in our time. The minute a man indulges that tone, and the words of it, you know he is not

abreast, not alive, antediluvian, and needs to go to the tailor.

I have a notion that a man had better read nothing at all, save his Bible, than read the wrong books in religion—I mean the dead books. There is something in the air that will bring to him a gift of vital expression if he will let alone the miserable ancients fallen upon evil times and evil tongues. Field's *Handbook* ought to be gathered into piles and consumed. I could name half a hundred others ; but I am quite sure every one of them would have as many friends as has Field's *Handbook*—and fifty-one different sorts of enemies are more than I want. I doubt if any more we shall have any systems of theology. Perhaps we *shall* have one, one day ; but I have a notion it will be largely a philosophy. We are coming to the wonder of our religion, to the vastness of it, to see how it is related, and to know that all the world is a theology. Now, the neat, compact systems, with their catchwords and their precisions, with their fences and offences, their certainty and complexity—over them all the tide has spread its many waters. If you drag them up, and offer them, either for show, or sale, or use, they seem too draggled and dripping, too obliterated and uncomfortable. I heard a wise old supernumerary the other day talking with a young man, touching the things necessary to be believed. He was pressed for his answer, and, when he saw the questioner was serious, he said, ' Well, all I will say, as an old traveller, is—take a small

kit.' I do not know that I ever heard wiser words. They came home to me not only with light, but with comfort. What is wrong with a good many of the old books is that they will not go into the traveller's kit, and we are all travellers now. You have to make special trunks for them ; and they are only to be found when you want them if you have six yoke of oxen toiling after you bearing these as their burden.

But, while some books are too old, and therefore wrong reading, there are other books too new, and wrong reading for that reason. How shall I put it? I always relish the book lists of the probationers. They offer one of the happiest times of the District Synod. I am sorry to think that in some Synods they have delegated the lists to a committee, and the committee reports on them. The Synod, I suppose, has not time to look at the matter. Is it not a mistake? The Synod ought to *find* time. It finds time for much less important matters. A few of the brethren there would never hear of some of those books were it not for the probationers. There are a good many I have never heard of, and to hear of a new book is a great joy. But now and again I hear a list 'gashly' modern. If that were all, I could bear it. Sometimes it is a list 'gashly' economic. It is all political theory, advance guard of the army, aeroplanes, house-balloons, and other 'argosies of magic sail.' I do not say there should not be any reading about these things. One cannot live and neglect all that is printed about progress and

its conditions. What I mean is, there is wrong reading if these things are allowed to monopolize—if they are all, or nearly all. I have heard men who could not preach without the use of the long-legged, long-necked words that straddle rather than stride. Such an irreducible confusion of influences had been about their minds, their reading encumbered their thought, muddled their minds, and produced a vortex instead of a mirror. To be too much in advance of your age has its penalties, and they are always big ones. It does not matter what you are doing, there in front, you have to pay for going there, as you have to pay for going nowhere else. Sometimes you have to pay the price the Master paid, to pay it as best you can, holding loyally to His pure love ; and at other times you pay a price He never could have paid, a price He asks no man to lay down—the price that man paid who commenced to build and was not able to finish, who went to war before he had sent an ambassage, or considered his ten thousand.

When a man is exclusive in his reading, he always lacks something. Exclusive reading tends to mutilation. I have heard of a great preacher who was warned in his youth, by a doctor, that if he read imaginative literature he would end in a madhouse. Another brother was warned at the same time of the same thing. The one disregarded the doctor, and *did* end in a madhouse. The other took heed to the wise words of the wise man, and lived to a great age, with love, honour,

troops of friends. Still, I am unconvinced. I knew the man who eschewed imaginative literature ; he suffered for it. His own towering imagination was undisciplined ; it had kept no company but its own. I do not believe any man will be more sane for eschewing the poets. Indeed, the poets are the only sane people. Your scientific minds need poetry, or their science is impotent ; imagination makes its contribution to the daring hypotheses, to the far-flung theories, to the intuitions and the expositions of the scientist ; and without these your best scientist is a mere bag of dead bones. It is so with your theologians and preachers. Poetry read to quote is a curse to all concerned ; it is stuffing ; the filigree work on the coffin-lid ; the flowers made by the cripples—dear souls—for the subterfuges of the shallow. But poetry that is read that you may feed the hunger and understand the greatness and the mystery, that is read for love, this is the winged splendour of any man. If I *can* keep out verse and scattered fragments of other folks' sayings, I do ; they shame all I can say myself. But to go into the desert, into the fields and the woods with a companion who can sing, and has sung for at least a hundred years, is a very heaven, not of my invention. I love the hymn-book ; it is always at my right hand ; but, if the hymn-book were the only verse I loved, I should never hope to sing, and seldom feel the power of music. But, leaving all that, I cannot do without them. They are to me more necessary than food. If they were all burnt

up, I would try and invent something out of my own head, wander in the fields until I saw written across every acre all that Shelley sang and Wordsworth meditated. One who reads none of these is always reading the wrong books, whatever they may be ; and if he cannot read them, let him pray for a cleaner and humbler soul.

I have recently read the selection of Southey's *Letters* published in the World's Classics, and to be had for a shilling. Robert Southey was a good man. How good he was I fear to say, and how far above many who have made loftier claims he must be placed every man must judge for himself. How he loved books ! He stored them and sought them as only a lover can. He seems to have gone little to churches of any sort ; and he understood Methodism none too well, nor religion in its inward deep. But he was a good man. There is something in his goodness that religious people ought to understand, a power that prevailed in him not to be found in any life that is lived in a corner and among limited prospects of the mind. A certain sanity and lofty courage is lamentably lacking among those who go to churches and take their management. And this sanity is not to be attained save by wide vision, by an escape into the open, by meeting the revelations of God and His glory in the broad highways of men and life. The followers of Wesley should fear no book and neglect none. To know a little of all John Wesley read is a liberal education ; and it is a continual sorrow to

me that for many evil years, and one or two generations, we departed from the charity and tolerance of our father in God. Across a dinner-table the other day some one said to me, ' Do you admire John Wesley ? ' Well, well !

IX

OF HOME AND CHILDREN

THE other day I saw some account in one of the papers of a new play, and, since the newspapers give me all I need in that line, I read the account. It was well reported of ; and, so far as I could see, the writer of the play was regarded as rather above the average. The story was a strange one, and, as I have thought about it, it has developed yet greater strangeness. It was the story of a home of more than ordinary Nonconformist rigour. It would appear that the letters of the grown-up children were opened ; and, in spite of their years and their inches, they were kept in durance vile. I could not gather much, but there was an old granny who 'regarded the chapel as the hub of the universe,' and held that original sin should be scourged out of children with rods, and, if need be, burnt out with fire—and so on. She was alive at the time of going to press, and the whole play kept the house, we were told, in a ripple of merriment. Now, it is curious to observe what things will keep people in a ripple of merriment, if once the ripple

begins. I do not know that I have anything to say against putting on the stage homes and religion, fathers and mothers—not even grandmothers need be excluded. But what has interested me about the interpretation of the modern Nonconformist family is the antediluvian qualities of the family selected. I had a notion that it was necessary to know something of your cub before you licked him, something of your fool before you mocked him, and even something of your Nonconformist before you shocked him. Where are these families? There are many institutions in our land in which antiquities are stored—which of them holds these specimens? I do not want even our play-writers to live in a false world. Neither do I wish to think that anybody's invention is beggared. But, really, doubts will insinuate themselves. Urbanity must be maintained under most conditions, but is there nothing left of Shakespeare's line save a little 'angry ape'?

One of the sins that irritate me most is the sin of ignorance, the sin of the blind eye that has no notion of where the world is. And when these poor sinners nudge each other, and wink, and laugh so consumedly, at something nobody sees save themselves alone, it becomes tiresome. But let it pass. They have called to mind one or two things I have lately meditated about the home-life of the folk I know best and love better than any in the world. There is a notion that home-life is vanishing. Well, I can see no signs of it.

If you will go abroad among the working people, in our villages, and on the outskirts of our towns, there are homes to be found as happy and as innocent as any that ever starred this great land. I do not see that they are growing any less numerous. I think they are happier than they ever were, and as sensibly governed as ever they were. Of course, one recalls the great crowds to be seen in the streets of our cities on a Sunday night. I do not like to see them. It is one of the saddest sights I ever put eyes upon. I wish they were at home with books and by an innocent fireside. But was there ever a time when these things were not so? Remember, I am not arguing any point, save the deterioration of the homes we live in, and I ask, Did any one ever know a time when the streets were vacant—since they were so gaily lighted? They are there to meet their kind. It is the drawing-room and the parlour. It is not wickedness, it is mirth, and a love for fellowship. Moreover, it is a fashion. They go there as other folk make a round of calls and leave cards. It is a simple human instinct to mingle. Infinite mischief comes of it all; but do not let us suppose that ‘the devil is a city gentleman,’ or that he is not to be found save where great companies rove and chatter. Some of them will go home to a good father and mother, to simple tastes and pleasures. There is not the slightest doubt about it. It is not evil homes that fill these streets so full, but variety, light, oddities, new faces, and a spice of adventure.

They are not there because the ship is wrecked, but because the best ship becomes stale.

The young were never so free as they are to-day, and never were they better loved or cared for, never had they more tolerance or privilege ; and why it should be thought that just now it is opportune to draw attention to the rigours of the Nonconformist, I cannot say. The danger is all the other way. A little more discipline would not come amiss. I recall forty years ago that, as soon as a young fellow could earn enough, he would ' pay for his meat.' They can do that earlier now than they could forty years ago ; but I do not think they have lived up to the possibilities. The kindness for mother and father I hear of, and the self-denial of the elder for the younger is as frequent and as touching as it ever was. The new sympathy in our civilization is not wasted on the young, and is not confined to the old and mature. But what they *do* lack is discipline. The fathers and the mothers are taking it a trifle easy, not giving the benefit of their experience to those who need it much. The young read a great deal more than their fathers and mothers ever read. It is a habit you learn when you are tender of heart, and not too much involved in life, or you never learn it at all. And as the fathers and mothers were brought up in more difficult times, they have not the same aptitudes—moreover, there were few free libraries, and still fewer cheap books. So it has come to pass that many fathers and mothers

take no interest in the reading of their children. It is a world of which they know little or nothing ; they do not feel competent. Some of them are very well satisfied if any book will keep the children off the streets. I would suggest, however, that there are possibilities better guarded against. I do not very much fear the free libraries. But I do fear the ' six-penny.' Quite recently there have sprung up many little shops where ' sixpennies ' are exchanged. If you buy one sixpenny, or have the good luck to get one, you can secure another, for your own and a penny. If your own is not a good one, you may have to pay twopence for a really clean and nice copy ; but you will be allowed for it, in proportion, next time. I have been into some of these ' exchanges,' and looked over their contents. They are not admirable, from any point of view ; and the dirtiest *are* the dirtiest. Here is a danger, and a grave danger. It is easy to think your boy takes ' a long time to get through that book,' when the fact is, it is his seventh.

I should never dream of opening letters, of compelling a boy to tell all he had seen or spoken to while out for his walk. A decent hour of return is expedient, and a sufficient explanation when it is not kept to, but anything like suspicion and spying is mean. I verily cannot bear tale-bearers. I have a great sympathy with that famous head master who drove the tale-bearer out of his study, with indignant cries : ' Do not destroy my faith in my boys ! Do not destroy

my faith in my boys ! ' No, I am not for too much rigour, but there is one other region in which supervision might be better contrived than it is—I mean in religion. There is too much allowing of young people to go to any church that pleases them. The decay of the family pew is greatly to be regretted. It was an education to sit with your father ; as you watched him, you knew how to discriminate sermons, and learned to like the right kind. Besides, you strengthened the family bond, and made a profession as a family. All that is gone now ; and the great missions have helped it to go. Many of the young people have found odd jobs in the missions, or have enjoyed the freedom, escaped the restraints and the responsibilities. Free sittings are a great boon, but they may be enjoyed at a great loss. I could like to see every working-man with his own pew, and all of them there, whether the pew was paid for or not. The difficulty would be that the working man would feel he had no right to it unless he made some covenant with the stewards. But the loss is operating in insidious ways ; and the decay of devotion to one's own Church, among the labouring folk, is owing, in some measure, to promiscuous seating on a Sunday. I know there are those who *have* family pews, and yet do not escape sad deflections and miserable disloyalties. What would they have had without the family pew ? But, apart from that, it is a good thing to *compel* the children to go to the church you go to, so long as there

is any duty of compulsion at all. You have found it a good house in which to worship God ; those with whom you have mingled have helped you, and are your friends in many ways. Does it not seem likely there will be a heritage as good for your children as it has been for you ? We may be tolerant to the verge of betrayal ; and, I fear, a good deal of it is not tolerance at all, only a disinclination to take trouble.

There is one thing about the whole family going to one church that sometimes troubles me ; it becomes customary to talk over all the affairs of the Church round the table. That would not matter if we were all wise and kind, and the tongue found no delight in bitterness or wit. Every one brings his bit of scandal from his section, and soon there is little talk of anything but the bit of scandal. So young hearts become sour. The disrespect shown to one becomes a family resentment. The supposed mean motives of several types of conduct become common property, and the young people are biased, leave no name venerable, and no tradition sacred. It is here most of the mischief is done. They will get away to another Church where none of these things prevail. But is there a Church left upon the earth where no eye can see evil, and no conduct is beyond the reach of a young critic with his silly insight ? I have found no such Church ; yet I have found many who have soon become disillusioned, and cared for no religion at all, after they had tried two Churches and found neither perfect. We are in a

world where there are not many perfect things. We all have to be content with fragments, and the sooner we recognize the fact the better—fragments of virtue—of truth—of vision—of devout imagination. There is nothing full-orbed and perfect ; and I do not know that it would be a better world for creatures such as we are if perfection were a very common thing. So, I would say, do not lightly consent to the deflection of any child. I remember a young lad, in one of the Churches over which I had some oversight, who was drawn aside and enticed. His father would hear nothing of it. The lad must go to his Church as long as he was a minor. The father was as strong as was necessary, and would ‘stand no nonsense.’ The lad vowed he would go—but, on compulsion only. As soon as he was twenty-one he would depart to the Church he loved better than his father’s Church. The father let that be as it might be. When twenty-one came, the young man was one of the most loyal and lovable of all the young men in the Church, understood its discipline, and loved its worship. I knew him well, and he was all gold so far as I could see. The father had his reward. He was a strong man, and the stars in their courses fondly fight for the strong man.

One other thing appears to me to be worth consideration. There are times when we are supposed to have got outside most of the divisions ; there is little regard for them in the minds of most serious people. It is recognized that we are none of us as good as our Church,

and none of the Churches are as good as their Lord. Now, if a child takes a fad of a doctrine, or ritual, and will away to indulge the fad, should we encourage him in schism? If we consent to the young conscience so slyly alert, are we not doing something to foster the spirit of differing about things that really do not much matter, and matter nothing at all to the heart of a little child? If the Churches are in essence so much one—and they are—why allow one over whom we have control, before he knows anything as he ought to know it, to go about forsaking and fleeing in horror and reproach? Known unto all men are the delights of novelty, and to many children they are known in happiest innocence. It is a good thing to give a child a religion, to compel him to stick to it, until he has worked out its essence and made the essence his own. Too many runagates never ‘give the world assurance of a man.’ Guide well their books and their religion, and little other guidance will be necessary.

X

‘ MY GREAT TASK OF HAPPINESS ’

THE words, of course, are Stevenson's—‘ If I have faltered more or less in my great task of happiness.’ It is a sin he is fearing and praying against. In a time like ours one has to go to the poets, sometimes, for the wisdom of life, and, indeed, for an understanding of the gospel. Having had a good deal to do with preachers, I am becoming fearful, amazed, perplexed, sick, and weak. Having read the religious papers at the rate of about twenty a week, and particularly the letters written to them by many kinds of men, the malady is aggravated. I am told there is so much to mourn over, here is no place for anything *but* mourning; and that we had better mourn aloud, show all the fear and bitter, fond gloom it is possible to house and affect. Then I take up a poet who had not a particularly happy time of it; I read of a man who fought a long fight, most of the time in peril of blood and sudden death, a man who had to flee over the earth hunting for a little place where he might breathe with some approach to serenity, a man who had trouble at home,

and with his own heart, and I see him gird himself to his 'great task of happiness.' I read Wordsworth, and find he speaks of 'the deep power of joy,' and he tells us it is by this we see into the life of things. Or, again, when he is at a pause in life, and lies on his back somewhere near Alfoxden :

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths ;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

Him and his periwinkles ! say you ? On his back, in the grass, talking nonsense about flowers ! Well, I had much rather be on my back in the grass talking nonsense about flowers than on my back in the gutter talking nonsense about matter in the wrong place. The poets have a way—a way ! I know not how to disclose that way, but it is a way of happiness. Chateaubriand's only recollection of London, I think, was of some stonemasons at the foot of the statue of Charles I, whistling with light hearts as they trimmed their stones, ignorant of the monument's very name ! So can you look out, if you desire. But so did not the poets. Coleridge sings to Wordsworth :

Joy, virtuous William ! that ne'er was given,
Save to the pure, and in their purest hour,
Joy, William ! is the spirit and the pow'r,
Which wedding Nature to us gives in dow'r,
A new earth and new heaven.

I do not care very much for Coleridge in this mood,

and there is something apish and wicked about his use of ‘ William ’ ; but let it stand. There is plenty more if I had time to look for it. What has happened in our time that we are not to seek peace and ensue it? Why are we called optimists if we are not pessimists? Must we be either one or the other? Shall I say to all the animals upon earth, ‘ You are either a sheep or a goat ; and, be sure, if you are not a goat you are silly mutton ’ ? Is there no other course? Is joy a crime, and have we got so far into the mire that all that can be done is to weep and howl for the miseries that be come upon us?

Happiness may be a bit of a ‘ task ’ ; indeed, it may be a ‘ great task,’ but it is a task in which we cannot afford to fail. If we do fail we have failed at the centre, have denied our Lord. It is not happiness I am teaching after all, only the gospel. We may mourn and be blessed because we are comforted. What is that but happiness? If we mourn ever so, and are *not* comforted, refuse to be comforted till we get what we want, are we in the right line? Is not being comforted the right thing? It is a difficult business. But sure I am we shall have to get out of the mist and up the hill, or we shall never get home. Take the case of Chateaubriand. There he was in London, or his hero was in London, where all the currents of a great empire met and mingled, where great poets had lived, where great visions were seen, and many noble deeds had been attempted for freedom, and not always in vain ; and

all he could see was that a few stonemasons could be happy under the monument of Charles the First, and not know what it was all about, this carving of the stately image of a man. Is not that sentimentality gone mad? He could see one thing, and only the pitiful bit in that, and that bit not so very pitiful after all, if you consider justly. What sense was there in it? I have known folk go to Switzerland, and come back with nothing much in their minds but the strawberries growing wild, and a shocking distress because they did not get their fair share of them at the dinner-table. Certainly the wild strawberries of Switzerland *are* very good, and it is nice to have them in a bucket ; but was there nothing besides? Sometimes I have been reminded, by the talkers about the Churches, of these good people who could not get enough strawberries in Switzerland. What went ye out for to see? Are not the great mountains there still, wearing their solemn white crowns? Shall we not still be able to discover the mighty summits, the heaven-piercing pinnacles, if we lift up our eyes unto the hills? The fact is, too many of us leave the mountains out of Switzerland, leave the great things out of religion—God and the exceeding greatness of His glory. This it is that means a dearth of joy and the obsession of numbers. Has it come to this, that we *must* be on the winning side?

‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’

I have asked myself more times than I can count what that means—what does it mean? Does it mean seek to do something to set up that Kingdom, get it established; run to and fro, do your best to fix it sure as the stars and beneficent as the sun? Does it mean that? I do not think so. It does not mean to seek to do anything, but seek to enter in. The Kingdom waits not for any man to set it up. It only waits for every man to enter in—or whosoever will. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. How is it done in heaven? That is the first question. It is done from within outwards, not from compulsion, but of love. It is not enforced, it is the eternal joy of them that love. We may set ourselves tasks God has never set any man, and weary ourselves doing the wrong things, until misery is our portion, and our tears our drink day and night. May it not be possible we have set out to do things we were never asked to do in that particular way, and are breaking our hearts over failure, that failure which is an instruction from on high and full of benedictions, if we take it the right way? What, then? Are we to fold hands and sit still, gazing and waiting? Is that to be the way of joy? Not so. If we believe we cannot sit still. But do we find much care to believe in the right things? If any man believes in God, him will God deliver in His own good time and His own good way. No man who believes in God can despond, save for a moment, and only then when he has got his eyes off God, and on to something he was

trying to do. You wanted strawberries in Switzerland, and did not get them ; so naturally, for a moment, you are sad and exceeding put out. Go out into the spaces ; lift up your eyes, see them there, mighty and commanding, the mountains so radiant of His holiness, and as you look at those great mountains, where is the trouble about your strawberries ? We are curiously wrought, especially in the inward parts, but in the hidden part—which is deeper down than the inward part—He can make us to know wisdom.

It is very possible to take hold at the wrong end. I have a friend, a very dear friend of many years, who has this habit. He has helped me more than any other mortal, and I trust we shall not be far away from one another at any time. But he has a curious habit. I will not say how he shows the habit ; but this habit has many forms. Go with one who suffers from the habit to some great concert, where great choirs are singing a great anthem. Let one of these choirs sing Handel's ' Hallelujah.' It moves one if it be done by a dozen village lads and lasses, or strummed out by one finger on a piano. But when you have it done as it was conceived by the mighty master, then the heavens open and you hear the sound of many waters, and of harpers harping with their harps. Well, at the end, when you turn to him with tears in your eyes, having suddenly come back to earth, he says, ' Did you hear the string of the second fiddle snap ? ' Or you go with him to Switzerland. He has never been there

before, and you have told him of all the wonder and the majesty. When you arrive, say at Grindelwald, and look out, there is the solemn rose colour flushing the hills in the sunset ; the clouds are crimson as they adorn the summits, a very dream of steadfast peace and beauty. He says, ‘ Why, you cannot see the tops of them hills ! ’ One day you go with him to look at the great picture they have at Keble College, Oxford, the picture of ‘ The Light of the World.’ You have to pay to see it, though it is in a church, and Keble’s church at that ; but you pay your sixpence, and it is unveiled. You have told him all you knew about the picture, and perhaps a little more, and you expect him to be impressed. All he says is, ‘ It is a very little one ! ’ Once more, no Switzerland because you cannot have your fill of strawberries. Does not this account for a great deal of misery and entire hopelessness under the sun ? It is one of the sorriest habits we can ever get into, and one of the most wicked sins. But not many folk have found out that it is a sin, or have found out either how much of their gloom is just to be traced to a certain habit of mind they have formed by persistence.

We have been having, here in Leeds, during the early days and weeks of this New Year, a series of gloomy days, when the heavens were as lead, the very air seemed to be as lead. We could not see the sky either by day or by night. There was no sun. I said to a friend, ‘ Bad weather ! ’ He replied, ‘ There is not any bad weather.’ I was put to a pause. It is

not pleasant to see no sun, to rise in the morning and meet the grey sky, and be sure no bird can pipe to skies so dull. When you go out to your country appointment along dark roads, where no lamplighter ever gives his gracious ministries, and there *should* be a moon, but the moon is hidden behind those same yellow clouds, it is discouraging. We have had great plenty of that sort. Complaining of it, the other day, said a Londoner to me, ' But you should live in London if you want to see what the fog *can* do, when it really knows its business and is out to do its best ; this is nothing ! ' Two reproofs ! It is little use trying to be a cheerful person if you earn two reproofs of that kind within a week. Shall I take my revenge of these schoolmasters of mine by calling them blatant optimists ? There really is no bad weather. When you have been sick, and want to feel the wind play round you as you walk, when you would give the world for the patter of the rain on your face as you breasted the hills radiant with health once more—*can* the weather be bad ? Fog ! It is a comparative term, and comes of our own sins. But suppose the sun is gone, clean gone ; suppose the moon refuses her light by night. Let it be that all suggested is taking place in the Churches, that we are doomed to a persistent decay for many years, evil and long, and to fight a battle in which we see few victories ; suppose the worst prophets are right, and the gloom is not only in the public places of our faith, but in the secret abodes of the righteous

and the humble—what then ? I took up my Bible the other day, on a foggy day, a day of desperate fog and long continued. I found it open on one of the great poets, and I found also just one little mark, made I know not when, or by whom ; it was the Bible given me at my ordination. The mark attracted me, as marks in the Bible always do ; they are a kind of autobiography. This is what I read : ‘ The sun shall be no more thy light by day ; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee ; but the Lord shall be unto thee an Everlasting Light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down ; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself ; for the Lord shall be thine Everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended.’

XI

‘ DRAKE GOES WEST ’

THE other day I heard a passionate singer sing a brave old song, the burden of which was—‘ Drake Goes West.’ What it was all about I knew very well ; I felt it in my blood and bones, but at this time I cannot recall any single phrase or word of the song but this—‘ Drake Goes West.’ Yet we were most of us, who had any history and any old sea-dog in our bones, any love, from of old, of brave men and great deeds—we were all, I say, back in Devonshire, by the hills and the sea, watching gallant ships sink down into the sunset light, and wishing we were under the bellying sails. I went home and read the ballade of the *Revenge*. I could have gone on reading of the great times and the famous deeds when Drake went West. Sir Francis Drake was no perfect man, but I have it in me to say he was much nearer perfection than some of his critics. I suppose we most of us know a little of his history and his deeds. He lived in the times when the English had to help themselves, to help themselves against the great folk at home and

the greater folk abroad, against Spain and France and the Pope and old Elizabeth herself, in times when very few of the English were afraid to help themselves, and that in wild and wonderful ways. Drake captured the world, captured the whole imagination and all the hearts of those who heard his name ; even the gallant Spaniards were not slow to see wonder and the magic of the man they feared as they feared death and hell. Born of humble parents who must needs flee to Kent to worship God as they were not able to worship Him in Devon, he found his way to the sea, and from the sea he never returned ; he rests there now ; and as an unknown poet, but a right true one, has sung—

The waves became his winding-sheet ; the waters were his tomb ;

But for his fame, the ocean sea was not sufficient room.

He had courage and daring above many ; he had skill of the finest, just and competent ; insight and resolution ; an apt and a cordial mind ; frank, subtile in all things to be done, and with an eye for six inferences from one deed, and a swift grasp of all the consequences that might blossom out of that one deed. He loved his land ; he cared for the poor ; he forsook no man in trouble ; and with the suffering and the persecuted he was brother evermore. Freedom was his mother ; the right to be free was all he fought for ; and to make freedom still more secure, when she had begun to build a home, at last, he died in a strange land.

‘Drake Goes West.’ What does it mean? Well, it seems to me a whisper that ran from house to house, and from man to man, along the whole of the south coast of that ‘red land where so many famous men breathed their first air.’ Those were not days of public prints, of the swift telegraph, of interviews and flash-lights. The marvel had to be seen, and with an eye for an inference. Men saw an uncommon activity with Drake at the heart of it. The great man himself was cooler and happier than usual, and said nothing to any; only wrought mightily. Then, as they saw, the rumour ran—‘Drake Goes West.’ None asked him where he was going. They knew he went but one way—to seek God’s enemies and Her Majesty’s where they might be found.’ On this perilous quest he had been more than once, and never in vain. It was West—always West; for there lay the Spaniard whom he followed, and scorched, and harried, and plundered, all for the love of freedom and to serve his land. Men knew, when Drake made ready, *where* he was going and what he was going for. That is my point. We sometimes talk now of a man with one object, and maybe there are a few of them left; but what is the object? This man, we have seen what he was after, and all men knew he never went after anything else. Those who wished a quiet time, a decent habitation and a secure, a bed to sleep in and a whole skin, knew to stand aside. The romance was not for them. They stood and shivered with delightful apprehension when

the cry arose ; but they shrank. I know the sort. They love to hear of great exploits, to read of them in newspapers and yearly reports ; they will even give a shilling at the collection. But that is all ; and, if the collection comes too often, they say that Drake is a fool for going West so often. Why could he not stop at home, and correct the law’s delays, and right the wronged by his own fireside ? We have them still.

Drake was a mighty man of prayer. I have read what I could ; he prayed in ways that affright me. Men have ways of praying as they may, and not as they ought. According to the man is the prayer, and I am not sure that our treatises about prayer have very much in them, after all. When we pray we pray, and not out of the book, neither by the book. Most of the books on prayer make no allowance for its wildness ; they catch the tame bits, and bring all down to the common denominator. But there is a wildness in the great man’s prayers, a wildness that puts to confusion all our precautions. I was reading, the other day, of Finney ; it was a strange thing I read. He took the directory of the city, and laid the great list of names before the Lord, and besought that he might be able to commend his Saviour to all these. Then he ended upon this perfectly tremendous sentence : ‘ And Thou knowest, O Lord, I am not accustomed to be denied in these things ! ’ It puts one to all sorts of shame and wonderment. But Drake prayed no

such prayer as that, none that affrights as does this. There is a mighty story of how on the Isthmus of Panama—was it not?—he one day climbed a tree and saw the great southern ocean, and there he gazed, and as he gazed he ‘Besought Almighty God of His goodness to give him life and leave to sail once in an English ship in that sea.’ Put the two prayers together, and for my part I would rather pray Francis Drake’s prayer than the other one. I don’t know why it is, but Finney troubles me. Drake asks nothing but such as a mortal man may ask, and with a spirit such as becomes the creature before the Creator. Who can tell what was the spirit working in the man of Devon up that tall tree, as he gazed and prayed? Most of us, when once we have been in a ship, pray that we may never any more have the horror and the fear, the sickness and the shame. But here is a different spirit; he takes delight to sail in an English ship, desires to be the first that ever burst into that silent sea. The new, the untried, the wild romance, the adventure and the flashing of lights not known, the love of the vast expanse and the desire to bring home to his own land, and to his own ideals, all the wonders of the wide earth—these things mastered him. It is a great prayer he prays, not because of what he asks for, but because he *can* ask for such things. The tragedy is in the things we *cannot* pray for. It was of no sort of use, from many points of view; but, as it turned out, the freedom of England lay in those seas where he wished and prayed

once to sail an English ship. Consider well what that means—my very practical brother.

From that voyage on which he prayed the prayer in the tall tree, Drake returned home, and chanced to come into Plymouth on Sunday, the ninth of August, 1573, when the news of his return ‘ did so speedily pass over all the church, and surpass their minds with desire and delight to see him, that very few or none remained with the preacher ; all hastened to see the evidence of God’s love and blessing towards our gracious Queen and country.’ Was there ever the like? This was a high day, and they went out, we are told, to see the tangible thing, the blessing itself, tired of the talk about it. Drake had *returned* from the West, and this had as much in it as when he *went* West. There was a magic in the man. Hide how we may our failures, they are most of them because there is no magic in the man. The men who capture us and empty our churches are the men who have sailed unknown seas ; the same is true of those who fill our churches. We are in need of men who have been long voyages, voyages into seas where they have long prayed to be, and where no man ever was before. I remember going to hear Nansen when he came back from Farthest North. He was in evening dress. It was all so tame—the music and the limelight, and the great ladies in their adornings, and you paid to go in. What good was it? I found it profitable for a little. I could think myself back and try and see the well-groomed hero as he had

been, unkempt, fat-smeared, filthy, gaunt, and of no placid mood. I could think myself back to the wild regions of the utter north, and the bear and the walrus—if such beasts linger there. But what was that? To see him sail in from the real adventure before the mopping-up had been done—that would have been worth while. To see Sir Francis Drake come in that Sunday ‘during sermon time!’ What preacher could compete now? They had the wit to know a great man, and to do him honour, out there in Plymouth. The magic of the man! It is the man who has the great sea in his heart, who has sailed and fought, and trafficked in deep waters, and under all the skies that ever shine or frown, rain bolts or distil dews—it is *this* man who gives the keynote to our hearts, and rules us with his rod of iron. The shrinkage of the world has robbed us of a good deal. Now, not any more can any man ‘go West,’ as went Sir Francis Drake. But any man can go to a more rigorous clime; there are signs that ships are being manned for the voyage. When they come back—look out you nice Sunday preachers.

I would like to quote the whole of Wordsworth’s mighty sonnet, but must suffice me with the latter part—

In our halls is hung
Armour of the invincible Knights of old;
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we are sprung
Of earth’s first blood, have titles manifold.

Not for one moment do I imagine we are on the road to ruin, either in Church or State. Oh the times they—the statesmen and prophets—said poor paltry Elizabeth had ‘ done it at last ! ’ You find Drake with great plainness of speech, enough plainness to suit John Wesley himself ; and yet he has no glimpse that the end will be nigh. He sees outside the gloom. The man who can sail seas is not afraid the good ship will go down. It is the shirker who has no faith and sees no future. To retreat into prophecy is one of the most paltry of all deceits. Wearisome are many sorts of men, but the prophets have become a very pestilence, and all because they never saw Drake ‘ go West.’ I cannot think that, for all these generations and in all these lands, we have found a place where we might be serviceable, free, and musical, and now, at the last, we are to be cast as rubbish to the void. I have found the reading of Drake a glorious tonic—a grand escape from the poor contentions of the newspapers, and the callous manœuvring of the politicians of various kinds. It was queer religion that was behind all this wild foray into the West ; but it was a very real religion. It has some glimpse of the Lord Christ, and the courage of the glimpse. I am aware, too, that a good deal of it was passion for gold, especially perhaps in the shipmen and the carpenters, unknown maybe, but very real for all that. But at the heart it was old romance, most ancient religion, a stubborn desire to have a place where they might say their prayers, and never fear a

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seminary priest sneaking at the door. They went afloat because they could pray as they would, on ship-board. And, above all, I think much was of the will of God. When there is a great brave spirit abroad, who shall say the Holy Ghost has departed from the hearts of men? These great traditions haunt me as great hopes.

There's a far bell ringing
At the setting of the sun,
And a phantom voice is singing
Of the great days done.

Now the sunset breezes shiver,
And she's fading down the river,
But in England's song for ever
She's the *Fighting Temeraire*.

XII

OF REALITY

I SUPPOSE a good many who have read *John Smith of Harrow* have wondered a little at some of the stories. The brief biography is a sketch of the life of a Harrow master, who was threatened all his days with madness ; and at last what he feared found him. It is a beautiful book, and not long. He was great on swimming, and would urge his boys to dive from the highest board. ' See how all those wonderful fellows have gone head-first before you ; jump, laddie ; feet first, if you can't the other way. There's no shrinking in heaven.' It is told that once he said to a boy, standing at a second-storey window, with a queer smile, ' Jump out, dear fellow ; you'll be in heaven in a minute.' His parting words to a mother of children were : ' Lady, you have brought into the world five little gentlemen ; you must teach them three things : to love their mother, to speak the truth, and to believe in another world.' He wrote to a friend who had just lost his wife, ' And who will look after the children during the mother's temporary absence ? ' These

fragments may be enough. As I have read the brief little book I have been struck by the fact that reality can carry anything off—or almost anything. John Smith used to appoint his boys to all manner of helping offices, and he always appointed one to take the vacant place if the proper occupant should die in the night ! As you read no incongruity takes you. This man said wild, wonderful things, and all men took a humble delight in them. How is it we are so at the mercy of reality ?

Last week I heard a story of my dear old friend, John Leathley. He was returning from the Aberdeen Synod, and was persuaded to get out at Montrose and attempt a game of golf on the great links hard by the windy sea. I don't suppose he knew much about golf ; but it did not matter ; if he could oblige a friend, John Leathley would try anything. He had a ball 'tee'd' ; around, lolling in all manner of attitudes, were caddies of divers kinds, but all of them of the true and ancient and memorable breed. John Leathley would have no caddie ! They might look as they pleased ; he could be unmoved and serene. Well, he swung at the ball—and missed. He girded himself once more ; and once more essayed, and once more in vain. The caddies began to snigger. A third time John let fly, and a third time he smote nothing save invulnerable air. Then the caddies openly and without reserve laughed him to scorn. He tried a fourth time, and the fourth time he got 'a haud.' The ball flew

down the wind, and the direction was as delightful as the flight. It was indeed a marvel of a shot. Then he turned to the caddies with a fine, triumphant face, and said, ' Now, my lads, see what a man can do when he loves the Lord Jesus Christ ! ' The effect, I am told, was nothing less than frightful ; the bewildered caddies let fall the jaw ; a wild, hunted look came into their eyes ; and, if an angel from heaven had suddenly shone out while profane words were flowing from their lips, they could not have unmasked a graver terror. The likes of *that* was unknown to them ; they were not prepared for so sudden an arrest, so fierce and incongruous a turn to great religious facts. Of course, the words of my dear old friend, from some points of view, were preposterous. What about the three misses ? What bearing had they on his glorying ? But the great and vaunting passion of his soul, all heedless and trumpeting though it was, carried him through. They were stormed into surrender by his sudden attack, and before they could recover them of their dismay the victor was walking off proudly with his clubs. There it is again—just a soul all real and frank, carrying an amazing burden lightly like a flower. I could give other instances, perhaps I may before I have done ; but my problem is, Why should we carry it with so much magnificence, when we have nothing for wings save reality ? The man flames out, and nothing matters save the man. It is magnificent, but it is neither reason nor logic, neither fancy nor fact. It is the vaunting or the radiant spirit,

without guile, absolute in conviction, and the result is a strange and happy success.

I see in his filial and dignified biography of his father, Mr. Martin Pope recalls the fact that when Dr. Pope was a probationer at Inverurie the surrounding clergy named him the 'Arminian monkey.' It is suggested that this was a description of the young preacher's popularity rather than a display of any real ill-will. I cannot follow the distinction. I believe they really did hate—of course, in a pious way, or at any rate for pious reasons—the young man who filled his quaint little church. Moreover, he spared them not ; he preached against Calvinism, and that in spite of the fact that his wise old superintendent reminded him that no real evangelist preached sectarian theology. It is all so very long ago, and we are in so distant a time that names given then hurt no longer. We can recall without any shame, and hardly with regret. I have talked with very old men who knew those days, the fuel and the burning, and what a mighty theologian the young man was. All I am sure of is that he was passionately real. He did not love Calvinism, and the other people did not love Arminianism. How could they otherwise ? They were on both sides sure and flaming. They knew, the one by testimony of Scripture and famous authorities, and the other by testimony of Scripture and a famous experience. They were both in the fact, and who troubles for their libels ? They meant them ; they could mean no other, and, for my part, I see no cause

to be ashamed of brave men who were very sure. Reality is sometimes rather ugly ; but hardly ever so ugly as deceit. If it had been mere policy, it would have been wrong ; and we might blush for them then. Here was a beardless lad coming to their very doors, and with a gift of fire and faith, with passion and a free gospel, and he turned the world upside down. They said worse things of James Turner. They tried by this means and that to stay the scandal of the 'great revival.' Again, I say, I am not complaining, nor am I judging. It was all out of the great deep of their personal conviction, and we know we must not judge them as we would judge others. Sincerity covers a multitude of sins. There is something in mere honesty that disallows our virulence of reply, that inhibits a hard judgement. It is one of the tests of a man's insight and largeness to give him an age we have outgrown, a habit discarded and discredited, then to let his mind exhibit its qualities in intimate contact with their provocations. Tolerance comes to birth when we can respect honesty, and when we have a true feeling for reality we know what honesty is.

There is a truth of not hiding what we are, speaking joyously out of the fullness of the heart and mind. Spontaneity, ingenuous transparency of soul, is reality, whether you have attained the truth of things or not. There are few who have reached the ultimate. I have been reading the gracious study of his father written by Mr. Bardsley Brash. It is a book to do one good in

ten thousand ways, but chiefly in this, that here is a palpable picture of a man who cared little about anything save the whole truth. Training has something to do with this. When Denholm Brash was a boy in Edinburgh, out with his father one day, they saw a suicide's body being unceremoniously carried to its burial. There were no mourners, so the father said to the boy, 'Take your hat off, Jack, and let us follow the poor devil!' They followed to the cemetery, a distance of some miles. The coffin was thrown into the grave without tears or prayers. The father stood by and bowed his head, and repeated the Lord's Prayer. This was the only time the boy heard his father pray in public. A boy beginning there, under such discipline, may go far, and feel free all the way. That is reality, brave, final, and convinced. You can understand an old man, who had been at the funeral as a boy, saying in his old age, 'I never did think anything of labels.' A touch of reality, when you have it in you, infects, convinces, and illuminates. If you wish a man to be tame, ductile, damp, demure, and lugubrious, keep him out of the real. The real lives and rouses. As I said, it is not necessary that you should have attained the full, final goal; but, so far as you have attained, only let it speak and move, and the mighty soul of the universe sighs and thrills, burns and utters through you. It is this that gives its weight to reality, this that subjects humanity in strange ways. It only needs that the universal and the elemental speak and we must be still.

When a man has once spoken with that tongue, he cares to talk with no other. The world may make of him just what it will, he cannot otherwise. Sometimes he is regarded as insolent ; he is judged a crank ; by not a few he is left out as ignorant ; by those who care for conventions he is put down as unkind and rude. He may look out with love, radiant as the morning, but if any be bound in convention, though the love troubles them, they are much more troubled to be suddenly stripped of smugness, forced to sit out, naked, under the rain of the Eternal. It drenches them with cold, tortures them with the unfamiliar, and sets their trivialities fighting, hissing, and sputtering. I do not know that anybody ever fought against Mr. Brash ; so far as the record goes he had not one poor enemy. But I suspect there were those who kept out of his way. His children were sometimes dismayed at his holy effrontery as he talked to all the tramcar, and laughed and prayed with tramps. Something in them fought, and now they acknowledge it with tears. Were there not others ? A man has to take his life in his hands when he will have realities and live them ; but it is worth while. It matters little that we are dead ; all depends on why we died.

Perhaps one of the dangers of most of us is that we think too much of sincerity. I use the word in the same sense as Addison used it when he said, ' A woman is too sincere to mitigate the fury of her principles with temper and discretion.' There is something wrong with

even a woman when that is the case. We may be sincere and wrong ; it is trivial to say it ; but not many have made enough of the implications of that fact. A man must not be satisfied with any cheap substitute for reality, not even with sincerity. A man must be right, entirely right, and not merely think he is right. It is a difficult undertaking, of course, but none the less necessary. Before this fact policy vanishes, and Mrs. Grundy tucks up her dress and flees as if hounds were after her. It is not remotely owing to the fact that few have ever been in touch with reality—religious, intellectual, and personal—have ever taken risks of the deep and the final, that we find so many stone blind, and so many others stone deaf. When they hear good religion preached they say there was no religion this morning ; the ears of their heart have never been unstopped. When they go out under the sun and the sky they have no instinct of prayer and adoration ; the eyes of their heart have never been unsealed. They cannot worship God at a cricket match, nor see the face of heaven's best angel in the man who slouches by with his hands in his pocket and his head lifted high. They have no courage. Dr. Pope said to a man who urged him to have a telephone in his office—I think this was in Manchester, most likely—' Well, there might be one advantage in it ; I could ask you for a subscription without seeing how you looked.' He had a knack of those sharp and sudden home-thrusts. It came of a care for the real, a greater care for the real than for the

temporary feelings of a man. What we need is plunging head first into the facts of things, into the facts of the Bible, of God, of humanity, and, above all, into the fact of ourselves. 'I am a hound of hell,' said John Brash. He meant it. He had been into the lurking deep. His daughter brought him his breakfast to bed, and said, 'Well, hell-hound, here's your breakfast!' Then, when he heard it said by another, his mood changed, so beautifully was it said. He knew himself, as we all know ourselves, not by direct seeing alone, but by reflection. Only, we need to plunge and not be afraid. 'There's no shirking in heaven, dear lad.' I have talked at random with fiery books by my side, but I speak wisdom in a mystery.

XIII

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MOSES AND BAZAARS

HERE in the rigorous North the season has set in with more than its usual severity. To be in charge of a circuit at this time of the year, when it snows and freezes, bazaars are no light undertaking. But somehow the summer sun has shone on me and mine. I have begun to abate my comforters, to take off the ample garments of my prejudice, and to be no longer afraid of this weather. 'Dull November' is the month I write this in. We have had our festival, and it has set me on thinking. Lately I have done a great deal of reading in the Old Testament, considerably to my profit. It may be the changes coming over my notions and the weather have brought light on the book ; but, really, I have sometimes thought I *could* find a warrant for the bazaar in the Old Testament. What was it the children of Israel did when they brought their trinkets to Moses ? What did it look like around the tent of the great leader and prophet when all the stuff lay about, and there was a flare of joy and sacrifice ? I think I could name it. There are the rudiments,

at any rate. It was much the same, surely, when they brought their gold to Aaron and he made so sorry use of it. You can put the free-will offerings of the people to what use you will. Civilization and religion were better forward in the New Testament ; yet the Master built no church. He had little care for anything material. He would have you make a great offering to the poor and needy ; then, it strikes me, He cared not what honest gift was brought, if it brought the heart with the gift. I have not been able to find much difficulty about bazaars, therefore, in the New Testament. All I have against them is that they are a bit of a bore. To that I will return, however.

The Old Testament has had a great deal of my time, as I said, for some months past. Miss Stoddart has published a volume with Hodder and Stoughton on *The Old Testament in Life and Literature*. It is a charming book in many ways, and should be in the library of all preachers, especially if they are inclined to books of a biographical kind. I have not read it through. It is one of those books you keep by you for reference and not for reading. From all manner of histories, and stories, and poets, and lives, it gathers fragments, touching the various books of the Old Testament, and you are well able to find a new point of view or a new illustration for your heart and your studies. So far as I can see, the work is admirably done. But I have been disappointed to find no reference to one of my favourite passages in *The Revolution*

in Tanner's Lane. The text of Mr. Bradshaw's impressive fragment was—'Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest.' I am tempted to give the last part of the sermon—'What are the consequences of not Obeying this Divine Law? You will not be struck dead nor excommunicated, you will be simply *disappointed*. Your burnt offering will receive no answer; you will not be blessed through it; you will come to see that you have been pouring forth your treasure, and something worse, your heart's blood—not the blood of cattle—before that which is no god—a nothing in fact; "Vanity of Vanities," you will cry, "all is vanity." My young friends, young men and young women, you are particularly prone to go wrong in that matter. You not only lay your possessions, but yourselves, on altars by the roadside.'

But, good as this book is, the whole subject of the Old Testament and life is only touched. The subject is immeasurable. As I have read Miss Stoddart, she has done me more good than most of the commentaries. But my return to familiarity with the Old Testament has been the best of all. One thing has greatly impressed me—the marvellous modernity of it all. Why, as I have read of Moses and the people, it has put me in a better humour with every congregation in the circuit, and with their bazaars. One who has sat with ministers and listened to their sorrows, or with leaders of the people, and listened to the difficulties

they have met with, will be aware that there is perhaps some obstinacy in human nature. Men will not be led—not to speak of women. When you try them on the right road, they walk backwards. I see in the delightful biography of Dr. Alexander, he mentions that once his father and mother met him coming home from school with his head to his pony's tail, reading a Latin book ; and, he declares, he was not aware of his contrariness, so taken up was he with literature. I am afraid it is not the love of literature that leads most of us to walk backwards upon the right road. It is balm and oil to sit and deluge the graces with cold water of criticism, and the beauty of the people with grudging at their wantonness. We are all well aware of one another's imperfections. Preachers know what is the matter with their people, and the people know what is the matter with their preachers. It is not alone in private that we talk of one another's unreasonable antipathies and wayward wrongness. Take a company of ministers in convention and hearken to their plainings, and—indeed ' it is a great matter of patience to hear some men talk.' I can recall moods of that kind, moods to which I had yielded with little care or thought. They were a stiff-necked generation, a foolish and perverse people, sore burdened was the soul with their want of insight, their unwisdom and impatience, and the way they longed for Egypt and the serpent of old Nile. Who does not know the mood and the habit of fretful sourness in the judgement.

As I have read of Moses, all this has come back to me with a curious accusation and personal shame. 'Wilderness manners,' our fathers used to call the folly. 'My ill manners in the wilderness,' used to puzzle me when I was a boy, in the class meeting. It does not now. It is all there, in the books of Moses ; and evidently it is as old as the world. It is something to find that this want of simplicity and trust, the absence of a right instinct for direction and arriving, is not modern, is a fatality met with age after age, and in race after race. There hath no temptation overtaken you but such as is common to man. The beast that meets every man must let a great many go unharmed.

But Moses ! It has been a wonderful revelation to watch Moses at work upon the folk he had to shepherd out of Egypt. How he loved them ! They growled and refused, they reproached and were stubborn, they threatened and accused with every bitterness of the small. Yet, in spite of all, Moses remains faithful to his trust ; if they will not in one way, he tries them in another. After every riot in the camp he gets him away to the Presence and talks with God about the people—'Thy people !' They want leeks and onions ; their soul loatheth this light bread ; they are afraid of graves in the wilderness ; they think how comfortable they were in Egypt, and how much they had to eat ; they forget all the rest ; their memory selects for the purpose of the moment,

as memory always will, unless it be watched with care and prayer ; they forget the sins of yesterday before the sun is down to-day. What a people ! Moses himself they forget in a few days, and are dancing round the calf when he comes down from his communion with God. And how the great man bears with them ! It has been a daily marvel to read of the wonder of his patience. There was something more than patience. When one chances upon the great place where God arises and will make an end, then there is the pleading of the leader for the children of forgetfulness and vanity, the last strong and prevailing cry, ' Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin ; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written.' What is to be said, just there, of one's own pettiness ? Who ever endured as this man endured ? And the mighty thing is that God would have it so. When Moses but once departs from his steady love and patience, when he forgets, for a moment, and in a transitory petulance, worn out by their repinings, strikes the rock in his anger, then God recognizes that even Moses is not worthy of the highest. Even this hero can only see the land afar off. What would have happened if Moses had loved them to the end, if he had never failed of his utter endurance ? How long did they wander because their leader did not love them well enough ? Some say these things are only written, that there never was transacted anything at all like this story told. Of human nature

they must have ignorance 'smooth as monumental alabaster.' I know nobody could have invented like this. All is out of the very middle of reality ; and as I read there come to me lines I love to quote over many and many a fair hope :

Thou art not conquered, beauty's ensign yet
Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

To come back to bazaars ; I have heard it said, again and again, it would be better if we could persuade the people to bring their offerings and place them in the right place with a simple and docile spirit. So it would. It would be a very good thing if we had no churches at all, if we did not need them, if every house were a church, and if we looked over the land and saw what John saw in the New Jerusalem—no temple there. We have not attained to that yet, and there are few signs that it would be well to repine against the encumbering churches. We are in a second-rate world, and in the second-rate world we have not found out means yet to attain even to its ideals. It would be 'fine,' as the Scots say, if all preachers were great preachers ; it would be better still if all hearers were great hearers ; perhaps it would be best of all if all the Lord's people were prophets. Ideals are splendid only when we do not dim them by fretfulness. I have known men who had no use for ideals if they might not use them as bludgeons. They could always see

something better, when you had done your best ; and they were not slow to declare the matter. Of all the miserable folk on earth to live near, these are the most miserable. Moses in the wilderness was wiser than most of us, just because he had a bigger heart, and was modest. In his simplicity sublime, in his quietness strong, and in the meekness of his heart a pattern to all that believe. I have had my doubts about the meekness ; but they are all gone now, and if they return I shall just read his memoirs once more.

What has struck me about this bazaar of ours is the way we have mingled. It has been better than most class meetings ; they have chatted and worked, have fussed about and helped one another, and laughed and bantered and forgotten all their shyness, in truly amazing ways. When Dr. Alexander was grown, and his mother was old and failing, he tells us she would look at him and say—‘ Is that big man my dear son, Willy ? ’ I can understand something of the wonder in the mother’s heart as she saw the mighty change, and recalled the little nursling in its cradle. They grew—positively they grew—under my eyes, in those days ; and I stood off to watch them grow, and prayed they might never wither any more into deference, neither chill into insipid politeness. Sometimes I have felt it would be a great thing if a sudden break of moderate earthquake would touch and frighten, would sort and mingle, the various fragments and classes in a Church. They all seemed so

prodigiously afraid of intruding ; or of the way their remark about the weather might be taken ; they went away dumb, and the procession down the aisles, as they arose for home and dinner, had so proper a space between individual and individual ; they all looked at the roof so studiously lest they should catch a wandering eye—that I have felt like a sudden shout in the pulpit, a shout to stir or freeze—anything, to mingle and make them forget. If this is there, in any Church—try a bazaar. I know it will be a bore to some ; it will be a sorrow to none, if it be sanctified in loving service. To me it was a terror ; and when they began the fluttering and enthusiastic sewing meeting, I said within myself, ‘ Lo, there are many years before the plague cometh.’ I have to confess that, on the Sunday morning, when it was all over, I awoke with a sanguine joy that the talk this day would not be of muslins and change ; but what of that ? Who am I that I should fare better than Moses of old ? Perhaps it is easier to be a martyr than a saint.

XIV

WHY I AM PERSUADED OF IMMORTALITY

THERE is a great deal of individuality in the way one accepts the supreme doctrines of life or death. No matter what books we read, or what arguments are urged by preachers and teachers, at last we take our own, because it *is* our own. Indeed, we support our faith from experience, on things we have learned or felt. These things learned from experience are stronger than teachings of men or books, and so carry more. There is a personal touch that burns and shines in a radiance denied to all else. So I have found my faith in immortality—it has happened or come—so I have guided my life, and base my knowledge, such as it is. I desire, therefore, to open an individual method in this high and solemn issue.

I see the beauty of the sky and the stars—the trees and the hills, the valleys and the running waters, flowers and beasts and birds; the lordly beasts, with their kingly flashing coats, and the humble beasts, so timorous, lissom, and quick—quick as light and love. I go out to join the sunset, finding there is more doing

in this great world just about then than at any other time. As I gaze and gaze on the vanishing and changing light, something whispers to me, some word of which I am unable to catch the whole. Or, the times being propitious, I steal out at sunrise, and catch the first pencillings of the dawn, feel the first wind that comes with the first dawn. The diminishing wonder of the morning star, leaning on the bosom of the morning—that drinks away its light, and leaves it disrobed and desolate—a parable of life and death—is a word in a peculiar order. But I do not, I am not quite able to understand what the word means. I go over the wide and valiant earth, and, wherever I go, testimonies steal into my mind, very demurely, and with a shy reticence, at which I wonder, and by which I am perplexed. There are moods and moments when I seem to grasp the word ; and, while I yet strive to utter it, it is gone ; the sound of my voice disturbing the stillness in which the revelation was about to break. I do not know what all this appealing beauty means ; but it means something. Something it says, if I could only make out what that something is—yet I cannot. I am baffled. Beauty brings a presence, a hope, a promise, and half utterance, that is entirely consoling. I know not any difference of fine days and foul days—they are all alike beautiful. If I chance, sullenly, to resent the day or the beauty of any landscape, none the less I am aware it is knocking at the door, and seems hurt because I cannot, or will not, open unto it. It is

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there, suppliant. All the world is whispering something. What is it? I am not prepared to say. But this is where my strength lies—neither am I prepared to say there is nothing to be understood. I cannot move about among these marvels, and then remain satisfied that all this world is but a tumbled and discordant deceit. I have heard only half a word. There is the other half. I know, and feel, in my blood and bones, there is the other half; and for that other half I look and wait and—so I believe in immortality.

There are times when my musing takes an entirely different line. I sit in my little study and look round. The three sides of the room, and most of the fourth, are filled with books, as nice a selection as I can make. Outside there are more books—piles of them—but these are the friends I want near me, those I trust to most, whose kindly presence is to me as the face of a departed, as the faces of those yet to be born, in a better day. There comes a time when I look over these books, and think what a great deal of reading I have yet to do, how I wish I could read ten books at once, and taste at the same time the savour of each. Then I might satisfy and possess. Only the very idea is silly. From that I dream on what is in them. There are two shelves of poets—all the great poets, or all I am able to hoard and take to my heart. They sing on and dream. They offer me wonderful pictures of unsubstantial things, the light that never was on sea or land. They thrill me; I am better after I have wandered

among the flowers with them, or raced along the platforms of the clouds, danced my heart to some entrancing lyric—done many other feats of fancy or frolic. But—is it all vanity? Is there nothing here, real, final, or enduring? Is this world mere vexation and a striving after wind—or does it offer hints at things yet to be, and guesses of things behind a veil? There are histories, great store of them, histories of past ages, races, and moving adventures. Rome, Greece, Israel, Babylon, Europe, our own dear, dear land with its thousand years—I know not how many histories. But what of it? Are these great histories only vanished pomps of yesterday? Are all these stupendous currents of life and achievement a little dust raised by a wind along a heated path? Now is there nothing save a little mud after the rain of a cold, dark night? Is that believable? I pass on to the biographies, the philosophies, the theologies, and all the rest—what of them? Are those great men of whom I read entirely sealed within the iron hills, or blown about the desert dust? These philosophies and theologies, are they nothing but the spinnings of so many spiders who enjoyed the glitter of a thread, because it came of themselves and shone in the light? Is there nothing in it all—and does it all amount to nothing? I have had great moments amid their riches—these treasure-houses of the past, these pageants in which the world unfolds itself to me; great moments I have had, and I seemed to feel in those moments there was a

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mighty endeavour at the heart of things, that these, our thoughts and our deeds, that wander through eternity are not altogether vain, not altogether without their value. I was blessing—welcoming the thought—that behind and under all was an increasing purpose and a tremendous reality, one day to be mine and to help me with the other half of the word I hear when I walk the earth and drink the sun. But is there nothing? I cannot believe it.

As one grows older memories cluster and consecrate themselves. We recall familiar and gracious forms—now passed out of sight. There are children of ours gone beyond, and friends dismissed from earth. There remains quite a crowd of memories, glimpses as the hero passed, as the orator spake to us, one among four or five thousand. We recall kind deeds of those we knew in the city or the village, summon up to the sessions of sweet silent thought the nearest and the dearest one of all—cut off in his prime, or shut into the silence when life was only opening, and opening so very fair. Who can say what dwells in the recollections of those who had passed the crest of the hill, and carried with them the experience and fellowship of days that are no more, and possess still the sweetness vanished from such days as may remain. Well, are these great memories nothing—just nothing? Are they only ragged ends that cling about us, fragments of a snare in which we were entangled? Those familiar faces, those sweet and refreshing, those pure and

gallant natures, those we loved for themselves alone, and not because of any qualities, those bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—have they ceased upon the midnight of a terrible desolation? Is there no more hope, and does honesty bid us purge our bosom of all this perilous stuff? Well, I cannot think it. There is something in that half word I hear among the hills and the silence of the field, so I bend close to these memories, to catch the other half of that word. I have not caught it yet. But these memories help and give me cheer. They link themselves somehow—the sunset and the sunrise, the stars and the flowers, link themselves with these great memories. There are skies and meadows, flowers and strange mystic glories within, of which the outward world is but a reflex and a symbol. All are not lost nor wandered back.

As I move along the pathway, groping, listening for the word half spoken, perhaps lingering a little too long here or there, I find myself impelled in certain directions, impelled by the things I feel and see without and within; inspired, directed, and commanded, somehow, from out these diverse and inexplicable regions of mystery and half words. Authorities in the light of the beauty of the worlds, in the linked-up service recorded in books, in the philosophies and poetries, the theologies and the religions, powers in memories, come to me and I am no longer my own man. In this direction I must go, and not in that.

This I must do, and that I must leave undone. I know I must ; it is not a matter of argument, or inference ; it is sheer knowledge, blank as any rock, menacing as fire, and alluring as fellowship. What does that mean ? I am not free—something takes possession and urges. I feel myself a man under authority, and as I follow the silent direction there comes to me peace and vision. I have, alas, dismissed and refused to follow at times, and have gathered the harvest with tears ; to-day I seek only to obey. But is all this also a sheer obsession ? This law that is over me, is it a mere nightmare, the disordered companion of my nature, as a shadow is the disordered companion of one who walks much in the light ? Is there no such thing as ‘ oughtness ’ ? Well, others may take what view they are disposed to take, all things considered, and honestly endeavoured—for my part I feel this sense of inward compulsion and direction is carrying me forward to some region where I shall gather up and hear at last the other half of that word. Something draws me—the lure of strong desire. You may dismiss me with a smile, and then my heart rises up like a man in wrath and says a good many things you cannot hear ; and they are all consoling.

Then, after all these things and so disposed, I turn to the four Gospels—rather I turn to the first three Gospels. I read there. I come to Jesus, and look to Him, with eyes already lit by the one half of

the word. So I ask, and ask often, and grope, for somehow the very air of those Gospels seems full of—what shall I call it?—linnets' wings, unheard harmonies—half-guessed meanings—snatches of melodies I seem to remember—and dim forms I recognize. I feel myself drawn, as one is drawn to his kin or his beloved. I know something of the place He holds in history, and in the hearts of those I have learned to trust. There come to view the long and shining ranks of prophets who did prophesy in His name, of martyrs who died for His glory. I remember the prayers I have heard made to Him, when men and women talked very quietly to One you could not see, but who seemed to be there, filling the little cottage room or the dim-lit church. In the very sound of His name there is a hallowing and a strange fulfilment. Moreover, I recognize before I have gone very far that He has eyes and sees, ears and hears, as no one else ever did, catching the shining heights and the gentler and the deeper music of things, and of the whole universe. With His ineffable purity and His elevated thought, piercing to the dividing asunder, is He able to gather more than I have gathered as He inclines His ear. Does there come to Him, with His prerogative of power and humbleness, of sincerity and ripeness, His strange quality of earthliness that needs no ablution, since it is clean—does there fall on His ear the full word? Is He able, in the gentleness of His nature, to catch the meaning of that gentle stillness that

baffles me, and does He know what it whispers? From His altitudes does He look over the crest of the hill, cut by the road over which all travel out of sight? So I question with myself; then I take and bow myself. The upper room is not far away. I hear His voice, 'In My Father's House are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' The stricken sisters disturb me, and I hear, 'I am the Resurrection and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live.' Then there draws near the end, and, standing by the Cross, I hear His last great redeeming word to one who had failed, who died of his failure, yet died yearning in the right direction, and I hear, 'To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.' I know now what the word is.

XV

THAT BLESSED WORD—‘RECONSTRUCTION’

IT is odd how words satisfy and charm, without much sense of their meaning. I remember two or three, in my time. First, there came ‘Evolution.’ It glided through the air for those who had wit to catch it when they were hard up for sport. For those who loved a sounding utterance, and modernity, for its own dear sake, it was as honey on the lip. The use of it proved your final emancipation. Then, later, came another word—‘Environment.’ Professor Drummond invented it, so to say. He decked out its capacity, and opened its vistas; the sonorous sound of it did the rest. So we all went about discussing Environment. Now and then the word surges into turbid talk even yet, because of its bigness, when simple Saxon would serve as well. To-day it is the turn of ‘Reconstruction.’ The religious world is sobbing of it, the political world, too. I am not saying anything at all against these things, only remarking on the great, grand word, and the splendour of its support, when you are gravelled for sense, or don’t know what comes next

in your oration. One must confess there is plenty that needs setting on feet again, and much to be built up, and built ‘ different.’ A vast of things has fallen into decrepitude and confusion ; and, some way or another, they must be renewed and made young again, or there is going to be a very merry England indeed. But, when you have used the blessed word, what have you said ? What does it mean ?

I want to go behind the word, and discourse a little on the temper. It is really necessary, before we agree on the programme, to know whether it is to be one of music or speech-making, a May Day procession or a football match. The programme will be a programme in any case, but the thing itself will be rather different. So it is with Reconstruction. Yet there is something, it seems to me, underlying all programmes, and that is a temper. If we are to carry out any new and strong programme, we must take care of the mood in which we approach the matter, and the mood sometimes takes more trouble to get into than the programme. There is a suggestion in Professor S. H. Hooke’s little book on *Christ and the Kingdom of God* that carries some light. It is suggested there that, at the conclusion of the first stage of the ministry of Jesus, He found it necessary to change some of His methods. He had hitherto gone on the assumption that the Kingdom was at hand, that or ever they had passed over the cities of Judah the Kingdom would have come. But they passed through the cities, and the Kingdom did

not come. John was in prison ; John doubted him in prison ; many cities would have none of Him, and despised the message. All fell in ruins at His feet—so I understand the teaching—then Jesus took another line in full confidence that God the Father was so minded, and so directed. All things had been given to Him of His Father, and this disappointment was among the all things ; so there came a change of method. I do not either accept or reject the suggestion ; I only mention it because of the plan it opens, as Jesus set about reconstruction. Obviously, to see Jesus reconstructing his own methods, picking up His work to base it deeper, is a sight worth tarrying over, and may not be without meaning and value at this time. How went it, this reconstruction ?

In the first place, Jesus now began to take His disciples, or the Apostles, on long journeys. It will be recalled, even by ordinary readers of the New Testament, that Jesus did take the twelve on surprising journeys, into the outlandish parts ; and strange things happened as they went to and fro, talking, teaching, and working miracles ; but the significant thing is, these journeys were part of the method He deliberately took to stablish the new foundation for the final success. It is easy to see what effect these journeys would have. The disciples would get to know their Lord in a different and closer way and the Lord would know His disciples. Nothing like walking out far and often together, picnicking in the open, for discovering one another's souls.

Moreover, the disciples would get to know one another. It is quite possible the threefold grouping of the twelve took its rise as they went over the cities and villages, and each man chose the friend he loved best as they sorted themselves. Besides that, it is desirable, if you are to become a missionary, to try the problems with the Master near. Add to that the new association, the new thoughts, the contact with other forms of faith and types of community, and there is a great deal done, on these journeys, to shake the disciples together, and to shake them up, too. Much is accomplished if you can deliver your master-minds from the spirit of place, from provincialism, from conformity to type, from the narrowness of those who have lived in one place, always seen the same things, and worked the same fields. Now, I argue from that—to put it in another way—that the first thing in reconstruction is breadth of view, suppleness of mind, deliverance from the usual and the dear old lines we were taught from books, or from traditions, from Churches or from fathers. There is much to think about in this method and there is yet plenty to do, ere we, in our time, attain any such liberation.

In the second place, Jesus began to use parables on a very large scale. There are patches of the Gospels where parable tumbles over parable, and each parable begins—‘ The Kingdom of Heaven is like.’ I have found my young folk read these patches, and, when they had done, they were entirely perplexed, could

not form any idea at all of what the Kingdom of Heaven really is like. I have tried to explain to them why this method was taken by the greatest Teacher that ever lived ; some of them have understood, yet some have not. But it seems to me this was just what Jesus was going about to produce—a break-up in their ideas of the Kingdom. They had cast-iron ideas, and He wants to give them fluid ones. They had thought of the Kingdom under traditional forms, and He desires to get their eye on the thing as it is. They were politicians, and He wanted to make them poets ; ecclesiastics, and He wanted to make them lovers. Now there is plenty of work when you are turning things about so, making politicians poets, and ecclesiastics lovers—quite plenty of work there. Jesus attempts this work by a series of beautiful stories. By *that* simple method, He manages a vast deliverance. Add to that the further fact that He desired to give them a hint or two on the sacredness of the commonplace ; wished them to see and to feel, in their blood and bones, that every common bush is afire with God, and there is a great contribution made to a better way of doing things, a right temper coming along against the time when reconstruction is serious and at hand. To put this aspect, as it applies to our day—Is not the temper for Reconstruction one of letting go old notions, really letting them go, because we have got, not new notions, but bigger notions ? To me it seems as if one of the first conditions of doing what

needs to be done is a better appreciation of the under-currents and the hidden values, where meanings break out in a bake-house, and the heavens are like treasures hid in a field, and the future is all poetry in poverty, rather than coals and railways, wages and pensions. We want more poetry, or ever we are quite able to build anything as it should be builded, or so build that it will endure.

Then, in the third place, Jesus withdrew His Apostles from the crowd. I have recognized this fact for a very long time ; but I had not hitherto linked the fact up with other facts, or seen the part it played in the Master's method with His disciples. I think I see it now. Jesus came to a time when He feared a crowd more than He feared His cross. You must search the references, concordance in hand, quiet in your own room. But it is obvious, if the disciples were ‘ out ’ for the crowds, they were going to crucify their Lord. Perhaps I need not dwell on the Gospel part of this significant act. Perhaps, too, it is dangerous to say that, in all Reconstruction, we must not take our rule from the crowds—yet such is the fact. I am not against voting, seven times a day if it pleases you : but I have never understood the two Tables of the Law were first found in a ballot-box. We must have men who know, not men who lust ; men who can reap or sow, not men and women who are hungry, and must eat at once, or they make a rubbish-heap of the bake-house and the kitchen, the store-room, and the

farmyard. There are few who can see far enough, and they are not the folk who run into multitudes and breathe one another's air till it is putrid. The real seers are the men on the tops of the mountains, where the stars come and go—where there is neither much room nor much comfort ; where blasting lightnings fall, unexpectedly. So, do not think that the crowd will be able to tell you how to build the New Jerusalem. Jesus loved the multitude, and the common people heard Him gladly ; but he recognized where Wisdom dwelleth.

And the fourth thing is this—at this stage Jesus began to teach some terrible things about plucking out the right eye and cutting off the right arm, about forsaking home and wife and children, about selling all that ' thou hast.' These are words at which the ages have stumbled, and still stumble. But, be sure of this, no kind of Reconstruction is either an easy or a pleasant affair. It costs. We must die to live. The community must die, if it is to live. Jesus said to one man not, Sell all that thy neighbour has, and give to the poor, but sell all that *thou* hast, and give to the poor. The emphasis is very marked, and the difference is considerable. He told them they had to pluck out eyes, and cut off arms, and many other dreadful things He affirmed and demanded ; but it was always upon yourself the mutilation fell. He told them, too, they must leave father and mother, house and home ; that if they did not love Him more

than father and mother, house or home, they were not worthy of Him. The sayings are very grievous to be borne ; and I do not say how far they apply to folk who are alive to-day, save in the spirit and the life of them. But the sayings are there ; and, it is obvious, they were very seriously meant, that Jesus demanded this as the first thing and the last thing in Reconstruction. Yet, as I said, it is always on you, you yourself, the burden falls. Here we come across One who seems very far removed from the ‘ Gentle Jesus ’ we are familiar with. But Reconstruction is never a gentle business, never will be ; simply because there are those who must needs find the foundations on which they rest torn from under them or ever there is a possibility of a new Temple of Humanity torn out of their own hearts, or ever they can do a day’s honest work. I do not say, either, we must never ask those who possess to give up ; but it is obvious, in the method Jesus took, the giving up was to be done first and foremost by those who had not much to give up, that for the rest of the world—if they would *not* give up, they were no better than lost souls. One other thing strikes me, very often, on these matters—and that is the valiant and terrible unconcern Jesus shows upon the comfort of folk, on their ‘ temporal well-being.’ To me there are times when this is very perplexing ; but I have other times when I get glimpses. He leaves the man who *will not*, willingly, in the day of His power, to the nature of things—the heaviest penalty that

ever falls on any living thing. But above all, in any Reconstruction, we must give up any dreams that it is going to be easy, that it only requires to be sketched, and the green garden opened, when the community will flock into it at once, and behave like well-schooled and elegantly mannered ladies and gentlemen. There is the worst possibility we have yet faced, when we really set about doing the things that need to be done. If we follow Jesus, we talk little to others, until we have talked very plainly indeed to ourselves. His Reconstruction cost most of those who got least—as this world goes.

XVI

LEADER OR TEACHER?

AFTER reading many books, one finds less and less in the spoken word. That may seem an unthankful saying. For one who has spoken many words, it may seem a betrayal of his fellows, while yet they stand in the breach. Put it another way—whether is better, the leader of men or the teacher of men? With the spoken word that teaches I have no controversy. Yet, even then, the book seems to carry it over the word. I can put the book down, and think ‘secondly’ over, before I go on to ‘thirdly.’ If the speaker would let me pull him up! That disturbs the flow of his ideas—so it may not be. At the best, there can only be ‘conference at the end.’ So I cling to the notion that more is won from the book than from the talker. Only—and it is a big limitation—you must first care for the book, be keen enough on knowing to dispense with the nice and enticing trimmings the talker gives for lure. Not many have got so far as that. Most of those who bluster about preferring ‘a book at home’ know nothing about books,

are much worse bored by books than by bunkum. That kind of person must needs suffer the talker, make himself a bottle to be taken by the neck, poured into, or he will contain nothing at the end. For most the leader of men is necessary, since they are blind and need a leader. They have not opened their eyes on the truth or the world as it is, so they must be led through the slippery places, or over the hills, on pain of never getting anywhere at all. Aware of their limitations, we have them lamenting in the market-place—' Why do not our leaders give us a lead? Where are our leaders? How is it we have no leaders, as our fathers had? Where be Moses and Aaron, Samuel and the prophets, Luther and Wesley—where be they? ' So, wringing hands, they collect crowds by their lamentations, and set up for leaders themselves in that they give a lead, crying for leaders. They are a kind of Opposition where no Government is, and may be found denouncing the front benches for being empty—which is a very pretty sight to see.

Indeed, in the Churches leaders are an impertinence, an intrusion—only teachers are according to the genius of the Christian religion. The plague of us has been that we looked for leaders rather than teachers. The great work of the apostolic days was to teach. Take which of them you will, above all the chief of them, and you find they really do care about teaching, and not much about anything else. Paul's Epistles are

long, some of them, now dull to many, simply because Paul elected to teach. The trouble with the Corinthian Church, the most up-to-date Church that ever was, and the most 'progressive'—the trouble was they desired leaders and not teachers. They were for following this man or that, according as they relished the manners and style of him. They found a man's name much better to retain than his doctrine, his party more to their taste than his discipline—discipline of thought and strenuous demand for thought. They believed it, because he said it ; they fought for it as they fought for their own goods. That was the whole trouble—they wanted leaders. It does not seem likely the years have made any difference in up-to-date and progressive Churches. Teachers are as worthy to-day as ever they were and leaders as dangerous. By leaders I mean those who tell you what you ought to do, and offer you the privilege of carrying out their plans ; I mean those who organize us into a machine and direct activities, they themselves having decided the fundamentals, the end to be attained. We are to do as we are told, and follow the flag. When there is any slackness leaders call a great meeting and rouse our enthusiasm ; they tell of the golden future and win our hearts ; or they chastise us with scorpions until we shiver for our souls ; and several other things they do, making us feel we have betrayed the cause. Only one thing they do not permit us to do—to think for ourselves. We chose them and they chose all the

rest. We delegate our souls. Our duty is to follow, not to inquire, to run at the word, not to understand. Organization takes the place of truth—is the thing trusted to.

Of course the weakness of all this is manifest when you come to think of it. The business of these men is to keep us from thinking of it. Yet come times in the stilly night, or the silly day, when we cannot help thinking—a bit. Then is the peril of the average leader. Moreover, there is the wear and tear of the world, the chill time and use always bring. These disperse followers, cut off stragglers. Also any small mistake of the leader, at such a time, is a very terrible affair for everybody concerned. Leaders cannot afford to make mistakes. A leader ought to be infallible before he sets up business. Now a teacher is not so. He can begin with one, and generally does begin with one, and pass on to two. But he is more concerned to do well with that one than to have two, or even twenty. When he wants a lot and a great following, he has forsaken teaching and become a leader. The teacher trusts to the eyes of the mind, not to the strength of the will. When he has made any see, he can afford to leave them ; and if they only see one thing as it is, the teacher is quite sure they will soon see several other things as they are. Be that as it may, he is anxious that they should know, root and branch, top and bottom ; he leaves the rest to follow at its leisure. Yes, at its leisure ; for there is no

precipitancy about the true teacher. First the green blade, then the full corn in the ear. Often he lets the green blade struggle through a whole winter of discontent ; so sows the grain that it must meet the winter first—unconcerned at the peril is he, provided the roots are deep and sound. The teacher wants his scholar right on the thing as it really is. He is a foolish teacher if he wants his scholar on the thing as the teacher thinks it to be—a partisan then he has become—a leader of men, not a teacher. He must have his scholar know the truth and—freedom then comes. Yes, more than freedom comes when a man knows the truth—God comes. The peril of a leader of men is that he gets in the way of God. Often enough, he is made a god of. It is quite natural ; for men must have a god of some sort ; and, if there is no real God, then they will pick up that which seems likeliest, or that moves about in the direction they look for a god. When we know the truth God comes. He never does come until the truth is known ; how can He ? He sends the truth to hunt us out ; the truth—His deputy. But when the truth has found us, and we have found the truth—then God ! It is just as science—first knowledge, and then power.

Then comes a great change—instruction passes into creation. I wonder if I can make this plain ? The times and times I have heard men chirp about Paul must plant and Apollos must water—and all the rest of the verses. As they have gone over the verses they

have emitted a great sigh of resignation, since, if there was no increase, they were not to blame. All was mystery ; they could but do their bit, then leave it to the inscrutable. But there is no inscrutable—none whatever. If there is no increase, then there has been something wrong with the planting and the watering. It is just as true in the world of the spirit as it is true in the world of matter. It is as true for the Churches as for the laboratories. When there is no increase, no creation, something is wrong in the relations, something wanting in adaptabilities ; and the adaptabilities may be wrong because the understanding is wrong. When men or women have rightly related themselves to the world of spirit, then the world of spirit answers as the world of nature answers. Paul's way of putting it seems to me the only way to put it—the very word. When the planting is right, and the watering right—then the increase. When we have the right going down of the roots into the right soil, the continuous co-operation from the outer, then the inner and immeasurable works and—there is creation—positive creation. The charm and power of instruction is that it passes into creation. I have no difficulty about praying and asking ; but I am much more anxious to give the divine a chance to create by getting down on the sources. God has elected to wait for us. We are so made in these regions that He must needs wait for us, or ever His creative energies flow into the channels of conduct, religion, and revelation.

When we are in the truth, then comes His sanctification, His catching of us up into the whole ; and a new manifestation appears in the universe, a new energy streams. Call it grace or what you will, it is very wonderful and it is universal. But we must be in the truth. We know the truth by dropping lies—all lies ; seeking humbly, with mind alert following the first light we find, and subjecting our will. The teacher points the way—that man who helps us to do something for ourselves, who shows us something we have not seen before, beguiles us to fall in love with it, or at any rate shows us it is a real thing, against which we must not hurl ourselves—a real thing, on which we must either anchor or split. Your leader hurries you out into a strange land, bids you do and dare. Not so the teacher ; he makes you at home among things as they are ; and then you handle as you ought and are handled as you have always wanted to be handled.

My feeling is that leaders may become mere humbugs. I have read pretty extensively in biography, and in famous men's memoirs. They are not all of them encouraging reading, these books of memoirs and biographies. Strange tales are told. Take General Booth's story ; read it carefully ; note the things not said, the patches where there is an air of reserve, and you are a very poor reader indeed if you suppose generals and leaders are always the best men. Mere authority always corrupts. There have been men in

the Churches who were very masterful, would not allow anybody else to know anything in their presence. Keeping up their position, they wore themselves out, even had to economize more or less of the truth. The times I have seen a leader become a Moloch—one who made all others pass through the fire of his hollow places, on pain of utter dismissal. Politicians mostly they have been—but not exclusively. Leaders too often ruin themselves. At the end of the day, they have nobody to lead, and are sour because their shouting produces no followers, only echoes. These crawl away into some corner to die ; or, they take to bitterness and railing. How many leaders are there who have led to the end, not found any falling off, or any worsening in their own souls ? But your teacher, your man who does not direct you, only enlightens you, who does not command, only informs ; the man who brings you in touch with realities, and one after another unveils for you the four points of the compass ; this man, he grows to the end. At the last, in proportion as he is simple towards the truth, and open to his fellows, he goes up and on, shines more and more, and is translated so that he does not see death. So for my part—please, no leaders ! They are not for me. I have been where folk make them, and know how the creatures are put together. I have heard the clicking of the wheels, in their inwards, seen their mechanical gestures, fine and flowing, but like the arms of a windmill. One I knew who asked me

after he had got his arms ready for that fine flowing motion—asked me, indeed, to whistle for a wind, offered me much if I would get others to whistle for a wind.

XVII

THE TWO SIDES OF THE HILL

MR. STOPFORD BROOKE had a theory that the joy of natural scenery, now so passionate in English poetry, descended upon English Literature from Scotland, by way of Thomson. It is very likely. The Scots had more of it than the English, and more time to see it. They suffered; and to purge their pain they learned to take with it a little joy—‘This is my own, my native land.’ Moreover, they knew the defence of that which afflicted them, and made the most of it. The beauty came later; always there was the strength and fastness against a day of battle, the pass, in a time of foray, the last fortress of the high mountain. Frankly, I am glad to recognize that Scotland conquered English poetry to its highest service, or at least put modern poetry in the best way to be visionary and victorious. Yet the English have added something. That great man of the Border lands—William Wordsworth—added most. He made nature live, put a spirit in every lonely place, and a soul in every glen and hill. Nature was no longer a

refuge from armed men only, no longer an external glory to contemplate ; she was also a companion, a fellow-mortal, informed, alive, stretching out and lifting over man her own majestic spirit—articulate, convincing, close, and all-pervasive. One has but to read *The Prelude* to see all this. To love and enjoy *The Prelude* is to be partaker also. It is not to the sea only Wordsworth bids you pause and hearken, not to the hearing of the ear alone he makes challenge, when he bids you hush—‘ Listen, the mighty Being is awake.’

I was out among the hills this week ; had quiet, lonely days in rain and sun, in wind and stillness. Of one hill I made a companion and a comrade. There were many more hills, all bare, save for teeming water-courses and wet sheep—bleating after strayed lambs ; but I made my days with one hill. It is best if you are to know, well, anything at all, best to select and get near, watch and take the mood as well as the permanent, the shadow and the change, as well as the eternal and unvarying outline. So I took a week for that one hill, morning, noon, and night ; in sunshine and in heavy dark clouds. Always, two or three times a day, in varying lights, I went up or round and under. There is more to be seen that way. Some of my friends, that very week, were journeying over the whole land in its fairer parts ; driving abroad and then home ; through fair cities and noble landscapes they urged their way. Their eyes, I know,

would be open as mine, avid for beauty, eager for joyful gleams. Yet I doubt whether they saw as much as I saw. Be that as it may, I saw more on that one hill than I have seen going through or over seven hills a day. For those who are not so fierce upon the leg, more scant o' breath than once they were, perhaps there is consolation in the fact, that the attempted secret of a single hill is a very subtle and consoling possession. It requires patience, gentleness, some courage, and not too many companions; and, above all, an infinite capacity not to be bored, so long as you can look and listen.

It was many, many miles away from any railway. You cannot hear on the stillest night the far-away rumble of a train or the shrill call of the engine's whistle. The air is clean. Collars are four times as long going to the wash. The hill, too, is clean—clean to the green foot it thrusts into the very streets of the village. The roads are clean, and one road is green as the greenest meadow, right to the summit. To-day—or that day—primroses embroidered the way, and cowslips nodded at you over the wall. After all, the hill I explored was only a buttress of the huge mass—flung forward to support the vast body of summits. Yet it pleased me to name that hill apart. Thrust full south as an offering to the light, or a contribution to the finest valley in all England, you knew the noon-day had come when the sun shone right before as you looked from the middle of the mass. On either side

the hill great waters stormed down in the valley. The rain had been immense, and there was little difference between the river and its tributary, save that the tributary was the noisier of the two—as tributaries have a way of being. In the morning I took to the right. In the afternoon I took to the left. The right hand gave me the early splendour. The left hand gave me the evening colour. The right hand delivered me from the bitter wind; the left hand led me up where the wind was swift and terrible—a fellowship for the strong, and a discipline for the dreamer. Look where I would, other summits gloomed or glowed. At times they were purple—gloriously palled as for the burial of dead kings—then they shone through as though all the rainbows had broken and fallen there. What would you? These things are only seen when it is no season of clear weather. If you will have good weather, you cannot have some other things. The hill showed me that, at any rate. Gloom, tempests, deluges, cataracts roaring down the steep—then awful grandeurs, and momentary glimpses of a light inexpressible that touches, troubles, and consoles,

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought

to sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not.

I certainly am becoming a bit too 'precious.' Let me amend by repeating—when the wind was too high

I took to the right. If there was a gleam of sun I got it. If there was even a capful of wind I did *not* get it. I escaped the wind and won the sun by my choice of the side of the hill. Is that domestic and practical enough? It ought to be, for very few have learned so much as that. I can't even pretend I have learned so much myself, save in legs and language. I noticed the pious folk with easels and brushes had learned as much as that. I met three of them the first day I went up the sheltered vale—painting away like souls possessed. They made their best pictures as they took the sunny side and the sheltered. Who can understand these things or, understanding, submit as to the Lord of every motion? I go down the village street, and there is a shrill woman—a very shrill woman. There is an auction sale to-day—not much—though it meant the end of a home, the death of an old, old man, and—squabbles. Household goods are in a barn. They are unloading a hand-cart and the shrill woman protests. Her protests have something to do with a will—a lawyer—six soup-plates and a silver teapot—then 'a second-best bed.' She knew nothing of Shakespeare's will, not she; neither did she know anything of the side of the hill where the sun falls and the winds come not, nor any angry passion. It is a little too late to raise debate when the sale is on, yet how many of us do that. The men grumbled—looked—gloomed, and said things under their breath. Still the shrill woman declaimed. I came away and

left the tragedy of it all—or the comedy, which, I know not. Thankful I was the sun still shone, and I had been taught, earlier in the day, not to be afraid or declamatory, though clouds and darkness were round about my soul.

When evening came, it was good to go up the grassy road. That kind of road is always good towards evening. Last night I went up again. It had been a sombre day of 'rain, rain and sun, a rainbow in the sky'; though, for my part, I did not see the rainbow. Getting up there, leaning on a gate, we looked long and far down the valley through the clean-washed air. Three or four miles away the sun shone, flooding the distant vale with colour and inexpressible benedictions. The day, as I said, had been very sore, gloomy, and wild. As we looked down that long vale and saw the light far away—though it did *not* shine on us—one murmured to the other—'And it shall come to pass that at eventide there shall be light.' Two hearts said 'Amen' to those great words of a great prophet—I sometimes think the most consoling words in the whole of the prophets. A proper place for a westering day and a westering man! The sun had gone down behind the next hill. The day was done on our side; but the fastness of the hills had opened away down yonder, opened and held open; through that deep cleft of the hills there was another opportunity for all beneficent heaven, an opportunity to fling light and promise broad across the distant places, through

which we go—when we go home. Beyond that light, through it and with it, are my delights and possessions.

What would you? One must needs go down into the valley at last. We each go in our turn; and where all go there is surely nothing to fear. With a sigh we turn from the hills; and just as often we are very glad of the valley and the sheltering roof. But the secret of this hill does *not* disclose itself, though for so long I have given myself to no other. The infinite variety of one only has appeared to me—the inexhaustible fullness waiting for patience, everywhere; but the hill lifts its head and gazes far away, yet utters not the deep heart of its mystery. Best perhaps to enjoy and not inquire. To ask why and how, to knock and still knock, though we have stood in vain at that door a hundred times, is the fate of many. There are who be seekers to the end. Is there a soul in that hill—some motion and quickening not found in any other place? It means shelter, joy, a challenge, a whispering wind of things not heard. Anon a hurricane sweeps over it; but the hill only ‘snuggles’ down upon its roots—abides steadfast upon its foundations; and the hurricane goes home worn out, baffled into quiet, like that woman at the auction. Wordsworth had a fine insight into mysteries. He was always asking, groping, feeling after, if haply he might find. He was not content to enjoy; and his answer—the answer he found and the truths he preached—is in the phrase I have quoted

already—‘Listen, the mighty Being is awake.’ Under and in all is a soul :

In all things, in all natures, in stars
Of azure heaven, the unending clouds ;
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks ; the stationary rocks,
The moving water and the invisible air—

everywhere there is the ‘presence not to be put by.’ Call it what we may—that is the message and the great joy of a great and poetic mind. I know how easy it is to laugh at the vast gravity of that country philosopher, that man of few books and no manners, fugitive from towns and schools, dismayed by the horrors of wild men, without measure in their freedom and their pride. But one thing he knew, as no man among us ever did know—he knew to catch ‘the breathing balm,’ ‘the silence and the calm of mute insensate things.’ Call him a cobbler if it please you ; but allow he could make boots for the high hills better than most. ‘Sandals’—I suppose I ought to say. In his doctrine I take refuge when books and men fail me—when my own thoughts are only a burden and a fear ; then I find something that fits in and rounds off. I stop short on the edge of many a precipice over which this vast mystic goes with incredible joy. But, on the hills and everywhere, as the best in me leaps out to meet I know not what—Wordsworth’s cry thrills deep enough—‘Listen, the mighty Being is awake.’

XVIII

MYSTICISM

CANON WILLIAM TEMPLE is responsible, as Editor, for a new quarterly.¹ The new quarterly is a venture everybody interested in religious and national development ought to read and support—particularly support. There is a place for it, need, and opportunity. The name of the quarterly is as alluring as its appearance—*The Pilgrim*. Longmans, Green & Co. are the publishers, and the price is three shillings and sixpence. The article that has interested me most is ‘Mysticism in Relation to Philosophy and Religion,’ by Dean Inge. Dean Inge made his first impression on the religious public by his book on *Christian Mysticism*. Since then the book has been largely superseded. But Dean Inge has not been superseded, neither has his interest in mysticism abated. The two volumes on *Plotinus* reveal that—two volumes better worth mastering than any two I can recall as having appeared since the Great War began. The student who has conquered that study has laid his foundation deep and sure. Well, in this paper the

¹ Written October 1920.

Dean provides one of the quietest and sanest expositions of the phenomena of mysticism that have yet been offered in English. It is sensible, sympathetic, clear, and perfectly informed. No man can appreciate Dean Inge who does not appreciate his attitude to the great mystics.

What are we to make of this new factor in the religious life of our time—indeed, in the intellectual life of our time? There are many who accept the mystical interpretation of religion who do not accept the theological. Many there are, too, who accept mysticism, and then swing a free oar, or drift, in morals. Huxley once said, ‘It does not take much of a man to be a Christian, but it takes all there is of him’; and in that aphorism, for my part, I find the one and sufficient explanation and warrant of mysticism—for mysticism is just the whole of man opening to the whole of God. Dean Inge points out that prayer is the elevation of the soul to God. In moments when that elevation is at its loftiest, we enter into experiences not to be expressed, and still less to be explained. They are among the most sacred moments of existence. At other times, among mountains, by the sea as we watch ‘the moving waters at their priest-like task of pure ablution round earth’s human shores,’ lost in a sunset, awed by a storm, quickened by the line, colour, and warmth of a landscape—then, also, we are enlarged, liberated from all the coil of mortal things. Add to the experience of the supernatural, and of nature

herself, one other, personal, intimate, and supreme—the magic and mystery of human love, and you have the three elements of the mystical experience. In one way or other this analysis exhausts the source of that experience. All three sources are channels and impulses of revelation. We find ourselves, and more than ourselves, as we explore these regions of revelation. The rational faculties are critical, but they are seldom revealing. They test, rather than explore. They take the soul outside its experiences and analyse that soul and its experiences as separate and apart. When the rational faculties have gathered these experiences, and dried them in ovens, they only leave a bunch of withered stalks, tied round with a string. Now God, when he set man on his feet to live, put him in a garden, not in a haystack. Mysticism is the power—I speak in parables—and the passion for gardens, flowers, colour, vision-thoughts that wander through eternity, dreaming, praying as they go, worshipping, wondering. If I might put all in a symbol and a couplet, I would go to Wordsworth's *Prelude*, recall the statue of Newton, with his prim and silent face—'The marble index of a mind for ever voyaging through strange seas of thought alone.'

Now, among my friends mysticism has never been very popular, and I do not think it is either popular or powerful to-day—under its own name. At a Conference I was expounding, in the chapel-yard, to a friend, certain aspects of religious truth, when he

suddenly pulled me up with, ' Yes, that's Sabellianism.' I was horrified. I didn't know what Sabellianism might be, but I was sure, from the sound of the word, it was a very dreadful thing. I came home, got my dictionary, and found what Sabellianism is—and was a little relieved. But, just as I shrank at Sabellianism, so there are others who shrink when you say, ' Why, that's mysticism ! ' They are distressed, and ' didn't mean it.' They wouldn't if they could help it, not they ; but, somehow, they can't help it, in their best moments. They even try to keep the thing out ; but it will keep breaking in, like cheerfulness into the soul of the man who wanted to be a philosopher. The big world sweeps up—swims into their ken—and they are lone watchers of the sky for one delicious moment. Then they suddenly pull the string and drag themselves to the solid, theological definition once more, to the orthodox position of the people called Methodists. Yet the experience is no harmful one, and is not to be evaded at the bidding of authorities. It comes—and we are helpless. We like it when we don't remember. There is a touch of kinship, blood answers to blood. Why should we ? Why are we so annoyed with ourselves when we forget, if all this comes of experience in prayer, with nature, and when we are in love ? Probably the explanation lies in the theological training we have had, the number of definitions we have learned by heart, the examinations we have had to pass, the commentaries we have read, the solid old teachers who

have had dominion over us, and the just fear we cherish of getting out of our depth and being drowned. Yet, if you come to think of it, there is plenty in the hymn-book that bids us be of good cheer. I have always thought one of the greatest mystics Methodism ever had was Dr. Osborn. Perhaps he would have repudiated the aspersion—with a verse from the hymn-book. But that very passion of his for the hymn-book proved his quality. He knew and loved the great old hymns—could crush you with one, and comfort you with another, according as he would. I remember hearing him quote the hymn-book in Conference, to prove something; when, immediately, a brother got up and said, ‘I will engage to prove all the heresies in Church history—from the hymn-book.’ Nobody would accept the challenge. That’s the glory of the hymn-book—it gives you sea-room. To be steeped in the old hymns is to become brother to a good many holy men, and devout women, who are not of our fold, but are of the flock and the Shepherd. The mystical life throbs in the hymn-book much more generously than the theological life—for which God be praised.

I think, in our departed times of exact theology, in the times when we tried to capture the first fine careless rapture in a cage of a wire-drawn definition, we could not very well make much of the mystics. You can’t gather the scents of the flowers, though you may gather the stalk and even the bloom. You can’t bring

a garden between the leaves of a book, though you may press there a leaf of every tree. Even then the garden escapes you. 'I,' says Ben Jonson, 'look upon a monstrous giant, as Tityrus, whose body covered nine acres of land, and mine eye sticks upon every part ; the whole that consists of those parts will never be taken in at one entire view.' Precisely—and it is the whole that makes the giant, and your problem in combat or companionship. Or, to put another point, Ben Jonson again affording help, 'As if we should look upon an ant or pismire, the parts fly the sight, and the whole considered is almost nothing.' Little things may be taken anyhow—our problem is the vast and immeasurable. It is no use saying Christianity is the ultimate religion, then expecting to get all there is of it in neat, measurable compass, for ready reckoning and industrious minds intent upon 'wisdom while you wait.' Still less can we expect to gather up the solution of the marvel of the ages, the infinity of the universe, and the glory of God in an epitome, to be committed by schoolboys and repeated by rote. Of course there are great words, vast, sweeping lines, verses, and innocent songs, in which all we know and all we need to know may be found ; but even these are magic casements opening on the foam of perilous seas in faery lands forlorn. Forlorn ! The word is like a bell to toll us back to fellowship, prayer, song, meditation—and from the prison-house of brevity and compactness we are emancipated. I have no quarrel

at all with theologies, nor with definitions. How can one quarrel with his own skin, or the boots he wears on a heavy road, or a heavy task? It is silly to refuse a cut from a loaf and a drink from a mug because the air is 'caller' or the fountain fresh and flowing. We must take as we may, and live as we can, not disdaining the partial, the poor, or our own poverty. All one need care for is the recognition of the free world, the lift of the distant horizon, the night with its stars, and the day in its dawning. These be the home, and I need not despise the gammer or the gaffer who loves the inglenook, the hollow fires that so surely burn out to black, and the lights that gather low. Or ever the fire and the light be gone—gammer and gaffer will be in a house not made with hands.

After all, in religion the last question of all is not what is nice, manageable, refreshing, or useful—but what exists. Unless we are prepared to concede as much as that, we build our Churches on the sand, and our theologies are mere ropes of sand. What exists is the ultimate test. We are toiling after the actual. We believe that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself—every bit of the world, from star-dust to sinner, from flowers to little children—reconciling all to Himself. There is something in all things fit for God, and that God wants. That something we find in ourselves, and in the whole universe of things. When we have found it, we can help. Every new discovery brings us nearer to that something, chips off another

edge or corner from the unwanted marble concealing the hidden glory of God's image. Good luck to every man with a honest chisel and a stout mallet, whether of wood or iron ! He, too, helps ; and for him I will bless the name of the Lord with—Hallelujah ! We are going home, seeking a lodging by the way, sometimes in the dark, and with little to pay the bill, when the morning comes. But we *are* on our way—and the end of the journey will be the end of the groaning and complaining of nature, weary of her bonds. There is no full and ample religion within a due recognition of these things. A safe religion is a silly one. There is no safe religion, and the Christian religion is the most risky of all ; it leaves you nothing if it goes under—not even your own soul. So far, with some of us, it seems to work out pretty well. That's about all we can say. It brings up certain facts ; and, test them how we will, they do not budge. Moreover, it whispers certain words in the ear and in the heart, as you stand by an open grave—and the more that open grave holds the clearer is the word whispered. You are constrained to go on—blindly—as that word steals through the inward chambers of your being. Evidences ? Who wants evidence when he has a great word, sonorous, harmonious, attuned to the chords of his soul, at which word every chord thrills and whispers back symphonic noises sweeter than unheard melodies. There is no dirge, because there is no death. There is no discord, because all comes of Him who is the fullness that filleth

all. There is no lament, because all things work together. There is no lullaby, because all is of the morning ; and no audience, because every harper is part of the harp.

XIX

THE BEREAVED

THEY had been talking round a dying fire—an autumn fire—and then they gathered themselves for rest. I don't care to say much more of these two—they were old friends, and the war was over, over at last, thank God! Neither of them had come through without loss of those loved better than they knew. They had compared experience, had lodged one with the other a deposit, had bared their nature, their solitary reflections on their sorrow and how it had left them, with what gain. Their loss was only too obvious. You could see it in their eyes, from which a certain lustre had gone; in their manner—a little weary. But they only talked of the gain, those old friends, there by the dying fire—an autumn fire.

‘Well,’ said one, ‘I think there is, at any rate, a new and sacred element in life. This visitation has not been all loss. There is a tag of verse somewhere about shattering the vase as you will, the scent of the roses will hang round it still. It is not exactly

so I look upon the new element in my life. The visitation is over. But the messenger himself seems to have left about the house, within my heart, over all the universe, an atmosphere, a presence, a dim radiance, a certain haunting awe and wistfulness, not there before he came. Even that is not exactly what I mean, either ; the lad is not with us any longer ; yet in another sense he is, as one of our hymns says, "more intimately nigh". There was a silence for a while ; then the man went on : ' I know I am trying to say things not possible to be said ; but the whole labour and responsibility of thought and expression lies there, in attempting to say things not possible to be said ; as painting is an attempt to give in line and colour things not possible to line and colour. At least a gleam is caught. Yes, I have gleams, gleams of an enrichment, of a new gift and dower to existence. As age widens the horizon, so has this widened the horizon, brought a shade upon the purple to deepen it, upon the brightness to soften it, upon the distance—that it becomes a lurking-place of wings and moving chariots, of which the gold breaks through at times.' His friend then took up the word. ' I have much the same notions. Life is not the poorer for the loss. Loss never need be poverty ; it may indeed be increase of wealth ; and so it seems to me this loss is becoming. There has now been time for the meaning to sink in, time to look round the shadow, to visit the night and not be afraid of it, because it is called

the night. The new presence of which you speak seems to me the most familiar presence of the day, and the only presence of the night. I wake with it, and turn to it as to the sunrise. It is not personal. That seems to me the perplexing thing about it—it is not personal. The experience is greater and more commanding. A window seems to have opened ; a new faculty is with me ; a different, or an additional, dimension is added to the world. I wonder if you know what I mean ? ’

‘ Yes,’ said his friend, ‘ I know quite well what you mean. The loss is, in fact, no loss at all, save in a certain crude and material sense. It is only when I am gross and passionate that anything approaching loss intrudes upon me. Under the new faculty and possession, by the side of the vision and manifestation, there is a certain pathos, a touch of familiar reminiscence and recollection, that wring my heart a little, and tug at the pity of it all. Yet at the very time of the “ tug ” there is a new thrill and a profounder content of the soul, in its pilgrimage. It certainly is something greater than I know, greater than I knew in the days when my children were about me. All the children in the world, in all their beauty, do not quite touch the quality, the serenity and security, the hope and the anguish, of this new thing, drawn near because one has gone away. If I were greatly daring I might even say that the chamber that was my son’s is now the chamber—I hardly like

to say it, but so it *does* seem to me—it is the chamber of the Son of Man, who also is the Son of God.' There was a pause, and the two of them dared not look at one another. It had been difficult to say, by him who said it; the other took up the poker and began to make figures among the ashes fallen from the grate. At last he said, very gently, 'Yes, I know.'

Then, putting down the poker, he went on: 'That same presence not to be put by, this same enlargement and recompense, goes with me wherever I go. There are times when in the rush of things I forget. I am busy at the market among cattle and men; I am hurried in the field as the rain drives up; among the push and rattle of the farmyard, I am often only conscious of the yard and the farm. Yet, even there, suddenly something stirs, and the rest falls away. I am forgetting, and do well perhaps to forget; but the present becomes too vivid and is challenged by the past. I see a face among the young fellows in the market, or hear the tone of a voice; there is an odd gesture or a surge from nowhere—and I recall all I have lost for a moment—know only that—then I know also all I have found. This new aspect of things is not easily dominant. I am not always reconciled to it. The old aspect seems warmer, more human, and to have more blood in it. Then there is a touch of betrayal. It is only for a very little time. All this profoundly modifies life, conduct, the outlook—does

it not ? ' ' Yes,' said the other ; ' there is no mistaking that. There is a hallowing fallen upon life. It is not so easy to be common as once it was. It is next to impossible to be unclean—though the devils of uncleanness have a sly way with them, now and always. It is as if life is now passed under the shadow of some place of praise and prayer. I seem never to be far away from the sound of holy voices. You remember how, on a Friday night, we once could hear the choristers at their anthem for the Sunday—how sweet those young voices were on a Friday night—winter or autumn, but specially on a still autumn evening ! Well, I can hear them now, or something like them, not on Friday nights only, but at odd and mysterious hours, when the church is far away and the lads are not near their music-books.'

Neither of them was what you would call an ignorant man. One had been, indeed, to Oxford—taken his degree there, though few of his neighbours guessed as much. He had intended going out to India—the Civil Service there. It had been his dream. He wanted a free life in the open, and in lonely places, among unbroken nature and untamed men. He was born that way. So he went to Oxford, and hoped to get out to India. When he had satisfied the examiners, he could not satisfy the doctor. He had, therefore, to stay at home. It's a long story and a rather sorrowful one ; but he had made up for the loss of India by taking a moorland farm, spending his heart among

the dales and spaces of the North. Yet he had Oxford in him. The other was not so near 'the seats of learning,' but he had read. Above all, he had talked so often with his friend, he could follow pretty clearly his higher flights. It was not, therefore, incongruous, though it might have been unexpected, when the Oxford man said, 'And what is all this but the escape from the particular to the universal. I have lost my boy. You have lost your boy—but we have found the fountain of youth and wonder—somehow. It's a quite different youth and wonder from any we have known before. You can't be young twice in the same world. You must have a different world, or you can't be young any more. We have found another world, and our two boys going there led us to this amazing adventure. We have lost them, to the eyes, in their limited and partial expression. Now we have found them—or they have found us, would be a better way of saying it—found them unlimited, and no longer in part. It is just the dropping of the particular and detailed—the expansion into something rich and strange, though it continues ever more the same.

'And this discovery of the universal is a kind of judgement day. Really it is—a kind of judgement day! I suppose the Day of Judgement itself will be no different from that—not in the least different. We shall be up against the facts then, so touching them, and on so large a scale, there will be no denying

the facts ; we shall see them as we see the sun at noon-day—and all our lies will collapse, just drop away and leave us. If lies have kept us warm we may be very cold that morning, in the sunlight. So it is now. These our departing boys have introduced us into a kind of reality, into a type of experience, so touched us with something universal and elementary that we are, as was said a moment ago, not able to indulge the common and the unclean as once we were. There is a verse in Mrs. Browning that expresses the experience. I can't quote. . . . ' He tried and couldn't, though he was an Oxford man ; so he took down a little volume, and turned over the pages and read one verse :

' O earth, so full of dreary noises !
O men with wailing in your voices !
O delvèd gold the wailers heap !
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall !
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His belovèd sleep.'

' Well,' said his friend, ' that's a bit out of my depth, though I follow you right enough—with my heart if not always with my head. But the difficulty with me is this—I can't take very much consolation of what you call the universal. I think of the Good Shepherd, who not only died for His sheep, but calleth them all by name.' ' Lend me the book,' he said suddenly ; it was a collection of verses. He turned

Mr

the pages carefully, and at last came to this—he did not read all the verses :

‘ She has gone to be with the angels,’
 So they had always said
 To the little questioner asking
 Of his fair young mother, dead.

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One morn, as he gazed from the window,
 A miracle of surprise,
 A marvellous, mystic vision,
 Dazzled his wondering eyes.

Born where the winter harshness
 Is tempered in springtide glow,
 The delicate southern nursling
 Never had seen the snow.

And, clasping his childish fingers,
 He turned with a flashing brow
 And cried, ‘ *We have got to heaven ;*
Show me my mother now.’

He could hardly finish. When he had finished, he looked at his friend and said, ‘ It may be bairn-like ; but that’s how I am. What do you make of it ? ’ Then the other—‘ Make of it ? On earth things *are* like that, and so are we made. Even in heaven things are like that, and so shall we be made there. It will always be from the particular to the universal, in creatures such as we are. And the universal is so fashioned that we climb from rung to rung ; and Jack’s advance is from a “ particular ” to the

“universal” that is above it. In other words, your Jack and our Jim—as they are down here will be up yonder—the first thing in heaven for us to see, that we may know we are there and not in a strange land.’

XX

THE WAY OF PEACE

IN time of war, how we yearned for the time of peace ! I suppose there is the same yearning still ; we yet are in no time of peace. Perhaps we have not taken the right road. There is no use blaming the nature of things, the road, or those who travel with us ; we don't get there by blaming anybody. We get there by taking the right road. By-path Meadow is known from the only description of it—' *So the souls of the Pilgrims were much discouraged, because of the way.* Wherefore still as they went on, they wished for a better way. Now a little before them, there on the left-hand of the road, was a meadow and a stile to go over into it, and that meadow is called By-path Meadow. Then said Christian to his fellow, If this meadow lieth along by the wayside, let's go over into it. Then he went to the stile to see, and behold a path lay along by the way on the other side of the fence. 'Tis according to my wish, said Christian ; here is the easiest going ; come good Hopeful, and let us go over.' 'Tis according to my wish ; here is the easiest

going.' No count was taken of the fact that it was on the other side of the fence and only ran alongside the way where they were then. ' 'Tis according to my wish ; here is the easiest going.' They let these sentiments rule in Paris when they made the great Treaty. We all let them rule at some time or another, in the day when we must needs make a treaty, or conclude an alliance. After a while, we are driven onward by one stronger than we, put into a castle, into a very dark dungeon, nasty and stinking to the spirits, and here we must needs lie a great deal longer than from Wednesday morning to Saturday night, without one bit of bread, or drop of drink, or light, or any to ask how we do. Then it is men and nations long to know the way of peace. There are very few content to-day, very few with any inner rest and quietness. The world is so full of a number of things, and they are all so dreadful there is no rest. Care sits heavy, and crouches at the door of every heart. Even the Churches have no certain assurance. How may we find the way of peace ?

It is a difficult question to answer. We are all wanting to be happy. I suppose we are convinced we have a right to be happy. Perhaps we have ; though I can never be quite sure. There is a good deal in Carlyle that casts doubt on any such theory of man and the universe. Carlyle is on the rubbish-heap to-day. He is pro-German, a worshipper of force, a destructive, a bilious old kill-joy, a Pharisee gone rotten

—and all the rest of it. Yet I am quite convinced it would be a very good thing for the men of England, and for the Churches of England, if they would return a while to the doctrines of Thomas Carlyle. Those doctrines are largely true, at any rate upon this matter of our right to happiness. Carlyle's scorn for the happiness-mongers is colossal, but it is healthy. Perhaps it would be more winsome, this doctrine, if it were not so brimstone-tinged, so bitter and raucous. Wise folk, however, will put the paper wrapper aside, not considering the tone so much as the word. If we do that, has not Carlyle something to say to us? 'The pretension to be what we call happy? Every pitifullest whipster that walks with a skin has his head filled with the notion that he is, shall be, or by all human and divine laws ought to be "happy." His wishes, the pitifullest whipster's, are to be fulfilled for him; his days, the pitifullest whipster's, are to flow on in an ever-gentle current of enjoyment, impossible even for the gods. The prophets preach to us, "Thou shalt be happy; thou shalt love pleasant things and find them." The people clamour, "Why have we not found pleasant things?" How can the indomitable spirit of Englishmen be kept up without plenty of bacon? We shall become a ruined nation! Surely, my friends, plenty of bacon is good and indispensable: but, I doubt, you will never get even bacon by aiming only at that. You are men, not animals of prey, well-used or ill-used! Your Greatest-Happiness Principle

seems to me fast becoming a rather unhappy one. What if we should cease babbling about "happiness," and leave *it* resting on its own basis, as it used to do ! ' I might go on quoting ; here is enough. There is much more and much worse—if that be counted bad—in Thomas Carlyle.

The first step in the way of peace is to recognize what Christian and Hopeful had to recognize. It is not enough to say, ' Here is the easiest going ; 'tis according to my wish.' There is only one end to easy and pleasant inspirations—in whatsoever region they are followed. There is only one escape from the consequences, and that is to think so no longer, to begin thinking in the right way. I suppose one must not use that old word ' penitence,' so I leave it out ; but there is much profit in a regretful outlook. I have heard men suggest—the past is gone ; you have done with it. Live now ; never mind the dead, or the dead days. Well, I have found the past is never done with ; it is not possible to leave it. I have found, also, to remember the things I did in the wrong way, or the things I ought never to have done at all, holds me in a certain frame of mind, not without its uses, not altogether removed from the spirit of wisdom. There is the very first line in any approach to peace. And yet, there is no need to be over-sad about this past, these foolish perversities—for at the heart of the universe is a great healing, to those who be of an obedient mind. I might put all this in theological or in religious terms—only I find

the other sort better understood of some I like talking to. At the centre of things there is an immediate reply to any man who corrects his way and forsakes his wishes, who does not ask first for easy going. It is a scientific fact, working in every laboratory in the land. It is a fact of universal experience that you get some small beginning of quietness when you make a trial on lines not assumed but known, however narrow and annoying. If a man corrects himself and tries, he will find winsome things stealing out to allure his confidence. There is no peace in being at war with the universe. There is no success for any one of us in a steady policy of distrust. Take life as it is ; follow its ascertained line—and confide therein ; then a quiet heart begins to find a little leisure from itself.

There are two other suggestions I would make—and I have tried them myself. The first is—you must be a lover. Now, I am not going either to extend or to limit that word. All I say is, you must love if you are to have peace. The beginning of so great a venture may be small, and the object of your love may be small, but the love must be there—sheer delight in something for its own sake, a delight that warms the heart, because that thing meets the yearning. Whenever such a beginning is made, there peace also begins. The wider the circle of delights, the more things within that circle bringing delight, the wider the peace, and the more that peace is as a river. You will find no one in the world quite so happy as a lover. He is a positive fool

—God's fool—in his happiness. If you find the circle full of men and women, blessed are you. The second thing is—where one loves one must serve. Most of the men and women I know who fail in peace, of any interior harmony and joy of sheer life, are the men and women who are not at all anxious to love anybody else, who just want everybody else to love *them*. Or they love—in their own little way—but do not care to serve; *you* must do the serving because *they* love you. It's what they love you for—that you may serve them. They pay you first, and then expect you will produce the kind of goods they want you to produce. But that won't work. You can't get it to work, however much you try. Peace comes, not of what you get, but of what you give. It's a searching and lacerating doctrine to those who are on the prowl for their own good, in order to make them a nest or a nose-bag. No one takes to the doctrine at the first; but so it is, and there it is. Shall I quote Carlyle once more? 'A benevolent old surgeon sat once in our company, with a patient fallen sick of gourmandizing, whom he had just—too briefly in the patient's judgment—been examining. The foolish patient still at intervals continued to break in on our discourse, which rather promised to take a philosophic turn: "But I have lost my appetite," said he objurgatively, with a tone of irritable pathos. "I have no appetite; I can't eat!" "My dear fellow," answered the doctor in mildest tone, "it isn't of the slightest

consequence"—and continued his philosophic discouragements with us.' Really, what most of us need is a loss of 'appetite.' We are suffering from too much appetite.

What then? I acknowledge all the faults of Thomas Carlyle and *his* appetites. But that changes nothing. Suppose the front of your house fell off, would your bit of a creed find no illiberal critic ready—'I told you so. Lo, this is he, and his pieties are—so!' Rather take the word and drop the man; for the word is a true word. Or, if you say: 'But suppose I do love and serve, what am I to expect of it all? Does it not stand to reason I shall be hurt the more, the more I open my heart and spread my hand? I become the prey or the playmate of all the vicious, or the boorish. And you call that the gospel of peace—rather it is the gospel of plunder.' Let me put it this way. Begin to love and serve where you can, among your own; don't go a-roaming, yet awhile. There is plenty to do at home. Begin there. Even there most of us may expect to find among our families some who may not—well, may not 'pay.' Remember, we are not seeking pay—not entirely seeking peace. Peace is a tower built on turmoil. And this, further, is to be said: if there cometh trouble in love and service, there the grace of meekness finds its sphere. For my part I have not found the martial posture a very successful one; neither has Europe. There must be some testing of our love and service—for our own sake,

as well as for the sake of other people. However, I have come to the conclusion for my own life, there is no other way of peace than this way, that the milestones along that way are these—Penitence, Faith, Love, Service, and Meekness. Turn the skins of these words how you will, and to your pleasure, but keep the truths they stand for, and you will neither be miserable nor bored.

And, as I close, let me add one other reflection. In Dr. Denney's *Letters* there is a touching passage. This Principal of a Glasgow College writes from the better parts of America, and this is a word or two from a long letter: 'I love the poor Sparta I was born in better than the greatest of dominions, and I would rather be miserable in Glasgow than happy in Toronto or Vancouver.' Or this, from the same letter: 'I never was away alone for months before, and I do not think I ever will be again.' He had lost the great joys—the face of his dear wife and the face of his 'poor Sparta.' I do not suggest that Principal Denney did not rejoice in the light of either countenance, to the full, while he had them. But I *do* suggest, there are many who do never know what fountains of peace spring silently at their side, until those healing waters have ceased to flow. Glasgow is only Glasgow—just Glasgow; and, for my part, I loathe it above any city in these islands. But it is not so to all. To those who live there, labour and love, were born there, or get out of it with joy to its blessed available solitudes, even

Glasgow becomes the Mecca of a troubled and a seeking heart. Summon up the days when all these things may be no more ; and you will find a sweet content that the day is not yet.

XXI

OUR FAMILIARS AND OUR IDOLATRIES

THE other day I came across a phrase rather interesting to the particular frame of mind in which I found myself. The writer spoke of 'our idolatry of the familiar.' Just then I was repining at the very opposite—our impertinence toward familiars. The writer—I forget who he was—discussed certain truths, familiar truths. His contention was that we worshipped the familiar, bowed down before it quite unduly, with abominable results to ourselves as well as to civilization. Familiar truths are, indeed, handled respectfully, when they are handled at all. Familiar truths in religion, or social contracts, are taken as irrefutable. We resent any outrage upon them. Those who show disrespect are deemed disgraceful persons, subverters of faith and morals. Familiar truths are not treated with familiarity. They are taken for granted, but any impertinence to them is little appreciated by the most of us. It is part of the inherent conservatism of our

race and nation—indeed of most civilization. Patriotism always finds difficulty in being either revolutionary or reasonable. The most familiar truth we have to deal with in patriotism is—‘This is my own, my native land.’ All goes well so long as there is no question of anything the truth may be said to involve. When questions arise we are liable to sudden and incomprehensible irritations. Other truths, on the like level of familiarity, fare in much the same way. If any lady says anything against Methodism to a good Methodist, at once something happens in the good Methodist’s mind ; probably something happens also to the one who says Methodism is ‘no good.’ We insist on respect for our familiar truths. Not only is patriotism conservative, religion is conservative. Something in that to which we have grown accustomed disposes us to content. Contentment is great gain, and no old bird wants to feel the nest is being stirred up. So comes to pass, I surmise, this idolatry of the familiar.

How does it come to pass, that we do not carry this to its logical conclusion, so far as familiar persons are concerned? Is there any such idolatry of our familiars? Most of us have noticed, I dare say, a good deal of failure to improve the occasion of perpetual intercourse as it might be improved, or as it ought to be improved, if we are to make the most of life. Fellow workmen allow their familiarity to breed something like contempt ; there is a tendency in home-life to

find the same old faces stale and occasionally sickening. One might illustrate how, under these temptations, we allow kindness to wear thin, and sometimes give place to meanness or to brutality, to a callous indifference of nature—just because it is only a familiar. Every one will admit, I think, there are perils of this kind. A familiar truth is not dealt with as we deal with a familiar person. But why is it? Well, for one thing, there is a great difference between a truth and a person. A truth is what we make it. A person is what he is—and you can't change him, yourself. A truth slips out of the mind, until we recall it; a familiar person, one perpetually by our side or returning thither at stated intervals, finds us, touches, when our mood is not sympathetic. A truth often lies 'bed-ridden in the dormitories of the mind'; our friends and associates walk abroad and talk, challenge and disturb. They will not keep quiet when we wish them quiet; neither do they always agree when we think they ought to agree. Each claims equal rights; and no truth can do that. A truth has the air, to the average person, of being mostly an abstraction, until some one disputes it. There is little abstraction about a stupid workman, a loquacious neighbour, a too obtrusive brother or sister. Even a father and a mother, a son or a daughter, can't abide in the abstract. They cross our inclination, so catch our moods and must needs endure, as best they may, the strange and perplexing inability we all suffer under, to see

the beauty and the truth they represent or minister. Over and above all this there is a mystical something about personality liable to propagate an atmosphere. We *feel* them when they say nothing. They are *there*, always *there*—more or less aggressive and insinuating. Their gestures, their smiles, their eyes, the very working of the wrinkles or the puckers and dimples of their faces have the effect of an emanation—‘get on our nerves,’ as we say. So it comes to pass that a familiar truth receives idolatry, and a familiar person receives anything in the world save *that*.

Then it befalls we become, at times, a positive torture the one to the other. A certain divinity is supposed to hedge about a king ; and, from that, one perhaps might take guidance. Our modern life has dispensed with a good deal of its ceremonial. For years before the war, ceremonial was in a bad way. The war put an end to it very largely. The advent of a less ceremonial class to governing powers has facilitated the dismissal. I am not at all complaining. There is no need to do that ; it would give my case away if I took to fretful pieties. The only thing to be concerned about is practical utilities, the harmonious working of the social and family machine. Of course, if there is to be no society, if the machine is to be scrapped, on the supposition that family life is ‘off the card,’ no longer tolerable, it does not much matter. Lubricants are unnecessary where no machinery is. We don’t lubricate an economic theory,

or grease the workings of the glaciers about the higher summits to Everest. Granted, however, that society, family, and workshops are yet necessary and must go on, there is sense in taking thought as to the best way of going on ; and one of the best ways of going on is by way of ceremony. Here is a story : I recall an acquaintance who was always saying to his friends, ' Now, don't stand on ceremony ! ' Of course he didn't mean it, though he thought he did. One day a newcomer was admitted to the circle. We had a lovely time, as the saying is ; the newcomer ran over with mother wit, so much so that I came to the conclusion he had not long scrambled out of the mud of the gutter. Studying him, I was confident he had a mother or an aunt who had ' kept a pub,' or ' sold tripe,' down Whitechapel way. It requires a training of that sort to breed mother wit ; he had it, the charm of the gutter without its grossness, the snap of the vulgar without its crudeness. He was like one of the devil's tunes slowed down in church to a holy hymn. You rather liked it ; it was so unexpected and, withal, risky without being *actually* improper. All that time our host had urged, ' Now, don't make any ceremony, you fellows.' I wondered what our new friend would do. The cigar-box was handed out, as, that frosty night, we put on overcoats. Thrusting it under our noses, again, ' Now, don't stand on ceremony, have two ! ' That was the sort of man. When the stranger—to *me* a stranger—came to the

box, or the box came to him, he drove in his hand and, taking our host at his word, clutched a fistful. It was simply horrible. Yet our host grinned and said, ' Yes, that's right ; don't stand on ceremony ! ' Is it necessary to say—our new acquaintance did not mature ? It was pretty to hear the host of that evening on a guest who had only taken him at his word—very pretty indeed. Ceremony, of some kind, there must be. I judge that sooner or later we are bound to attempt a recovery of ceremonial as quite essential to our security, whether in the house, the State, or in the Church. Ceremonial is the safeguard of decency.

Do not for a moment suppose any amount of ceremonial is likely to save anything if there is nothing worth saving of which the ceremonial is a fitting expression. Nothing in the world is quite secure when it is taken for granted. Least of all is love, honour, or obedience secure when it is taken for granted. To every spirit its own body, or that spirit is ineffective, unknown, dwindling, and liable to extinction. Formal manners are a wonderful safeguard to the finer qualities of our personal relations. I am not suggesting the finical and frippish rituals of the exquisites, only a decent and respectful conduct, a deliberate endeavour to make life pleasant for others, to consider their susceptibilities, their weaknesses, and their tastes—suggesting this as quite useful against the perils of familiarity. The best way to overcome

is to impose a certain ceremonial, to set up boundaries and hedges across which, if you trespass, you regard yourself as shamed through all your being. That, it seems to me, is the only way to escape. We may think ourselves strong enough to do without anything of the sort, may even regard our lover, friend, or acquaintance as unreasonable in 'requiring so much attention.' My point is not what any one may require; rather I am concerned as to what I ought to give in order to keep myself unspotted from an entirely detestable world of iniquity. They may *not* be 'worth it,' judging by this standard or that. Again, that is not the question. What am I worth? What is worthy, for any one taught or instructed in beauty, truth, and goodness? A certain ceremoniousness has often delivered me out of the snare of the devil; yes, it has often prevented me from making a perfect ass of myself, hoof and ears, bray and lashing tail. In home-life this kind of dignity, courtesy—once again, this seemly ceremonial—is half its heaven, and may chance to be its sacramental salvation in an hour of calamity and collapse.

We seldom understand until too late how much we have been loved. There is far more affection in the world than ever comes to expression, or ever gets a chance of expression. This is true of home-life, of workshops, factories, and mines in a far greater degree than most people believe. We are not so bad as we appear. It would be a good thing if we could show

ourselves a little more as we are in our essential nature *before* it is too late. It is quite possible to help by the cultivating of an ordinance or system of observance. A ritual in common fellowship is quite as valuable as in religious fellowship. Indeed the root of the two is the same, and the need for the two is the same. We cast down ceremony in our social life, so in a hundred ways deprive ourselves of gracious opportunities, of exquisite chances in delicate service or delicate speech—which is *not* speech, only a shy and romantic demonstration of depths and delights incredibly precious in any form of sincere utterance. When we allow ourselves to be merely casual, it often happens we become blind to affection when showered upon us. Not to have eyes or any regard for life's greatest treasure is to degrade existence and to foil the entire co-operation of the universe to make us at home. I have known those who despised what they called 'fuss,' that is to say, the expression and show of love's perpetual brooding. It didn't matter, love didn't, save when it involved getting what they wanted. For the rest, little regard did they pay however the lover's heart ached. The shocking thing about this tendency is that, begun young, it often ends in a sort of delight in torture as an exhibition of power—sheer, stark power to annoy and inflict. You would hardly think this possible. Still, it really *does* happen, dreadful as it may seem. So I suggest that it is a good thing to cultivate a ceremonial of affection—much

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as it is good to cultivate stated times of prayer. We are so made it is quite impossible for us to stand stark, certain, and immaculate in our kindness whether of heart or head. We must do something or the spiritual stuff withers up and dries out of us.

XXII

‘ GROWING LOVELY, GROWING OLD ’

THERE never was a book in my hand out of which I did not get something useful or wise—for me. Neither have I ever taken a walk from which I did not bring something home. Yesterday, for instance, I went over the hills with as much of a swing as may be contrived at my time of life ; I had eyes for nothing much—so many were my thoughts and so bracing the air. The sheer joy of exercise was enough. Then, far in the night, thinking over the walk, going it again, wondering what I had seen, there came before me two nosing dogs—draggled and tired ; dirty they were, too, and one of them limped. I recalled a farmer’s wagon behind, too far behind to recognize whose it was. Going farther up the road, the two dogs stood by the gate of a cottage ; then I knew whose the farmer’s wagon was. The dogs had stopped at the house of one of my friends ; she had a nephew up the lane, famous among tillers of the soil. Going on a little farther, the dogs had disappeared ; the wagon had stopped at the door of the cottage. Nothing but

a high-piled wagon was to be seen. Dogs and farmer were inside. That made no impression on me at the time. It came back as I went over the walk, and came back in curious and affecting lights. First, I remembered days when, as a boy, I had gone in front of my father, weary with overmuch walking, arrived before him at a neighbour's friendly gate ; there I had lingered, suggestively. My father would take the hint, as the farmer had mercy on his beasts.

This farmer and his brother, I have noticed often and again, are very much attached to their old aunt. The wagon or the cart always stops there, going home ; not going to town, always going home. Their time is their own then. It is not uncommon in Yorkshire when a man or woman falls out of the ranks—a farmer from his farming, a preacher from his travelling, a schoolmaster from his teaching, or a shopkeeper from his shop—straightway other farmers or preachers, teachers or shopkeepers, do *not* seem to have very much use for him. Their interest is not the man, only in themselves so long as the man was occupied as they were occupied, they had common ground, they had something to talk about ; trades union motives came into play. While he was in the trade he was somebody ; now that he has ‘ left the profession ’ he is nobody. Derelict or withdrawn farmers are not much sought after on market days. No bargains are to be taken out of them ; these have nothing to sell and from them you can buy nothing—so what's the use ?

You may apply the moral in other directions. It was not so with the dogs. The old farmer's wife was no less a friend because she farmed no longer, nor went a-milking, morning or evening. Still she was dear to them. Maybe she gave them a bone, or scratched the right ear, when they appeared ; I do not know. All I know is the dogs had not forgotten an old lady 'come down in the world,' as the saying is ; they reminded their master ; and their master made no difficulty. She was his old aunt, though she had done with the old days.

I have noticed—not to be sombre—a good many of my country friends, in their declining years, return to their own kith and kin with most punctual and primitive desire. Families cling ; old folk gather in clusters ; brothers and sisters take up the relations of past times and renew their youth with amazing gusto. I think I have noticed something of the same sort in myself. Blood, we say, is thicker than water. Those who say there is nothing in religious mysticism, who avoid it as the plague of the Churches, have never been able to make out any passable explanation of the fact that blood *is* thicker than water. Still, as we lose our feathers, or our hair, as our strength decays or we take to spectacles, somehow we find ourselves going on a journey, leaving the acquired, departing from the useful, the machinery, and the bustle to give our hearts quiet, to the old well, quenching of some mystic thirst ; we seek to gather flowers from old

gardens, to gather what may be left of all that once was ours. To me this seems very, very beautiful, and not far removed from the Kingdom of Heaven. The heart of the little child returns to us once again, and we are neither afraid nor ashamed to confess that this is so. The pomp and circumstance of life disappears—

Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides.

There are villages in Yorkshire where you had better mind your ‘ p’s ’ and ‘ q’s,’ so closely are they intermarried. No stranger intermeddleth with their joys but it is worse for him. Of these I have nothing to say. My interest just now lies among restoration, returns, and the fellowships of the blood—as it becomes the consolation of old age. This old woman is not to be left out. The dogs take counsel together lest man should fail. The young are tempted much more variously than the old. What is more, they have not yet learned to respect the burden, scarcely knowing what it means. One of the most moving stories of the great Napoleon—there are not many of them—is told of his captivity in St. Helena. Walking there one day with a great lady on his arm, a labouring man came along the path, carrying a great burden. The lady was disposed to stand on the privileges of her position and her sex ; the fallen Emperor drew her aside, left the path to the labouring man, saying to his companion : ‘ Respect the burden, madame.’ There is

plenty in that. Napoleon, in his time, carried many burdens ; just then he was carrying the heaviest his shoulders ever handelled. The young are not always, as I said, disposed to respect the burden. Those who are busy, so busy, preoccupied in duties and responsibilities, not unconscious of their own importance, are also a little given to lack respect for the burden—the burden they have not yet learned to balance. Perhaps it is not really a burden, this relief and dismissal, this retirement and sequestration—not really a burden ; only this very condition may be the occasion of a wasp's sting, or the opportunity for a fool's jibe, as it often enough is the chance of levity and too callous natures—natures without imagination or devoid of sympathy. So I was glad to recall the wagon waiting at the little garden gate. I have no doubt, inside they talked a little about cattle and crops. Quite persuaded I am that they talked more of the daughter at school, another brother seeking a farm, of old days, or changed times—times shockingly changed.

I read the other day, in a recent biography, of a famous man, a good man and a learned, appointed to die. He was sixty-five years of age. The last stages of his pilgrimage were slow and exceeding painful. His friends, as the end drew on, came to say farewell. Last of all came his brothers and his sisters—all that remained of them. Among them came his favourite sister. They sat and talked for a while ; then the tired man asked his sister to walk slowly

round the room. This she did. The eyes of her brother followed her every step, keen and steady—with what thoughts ! When the slow steps came to an end, the brother bid his sister good-bye ; and, there was no more to it than that. Yet what a parting ! We need not say all we feel ; probably we feel very little when we are able to say half of it. Yet the imagination gropes about the mind of that good man saying farewell—without words. Doubtless he saw his sister as once she was, saw himself as once he was, lived long years and through great days, following her with his eyes, catching and treasuring for the last time the motions of her going, the poise of her head, the carriage of her body, and the changing light as they made an ancient glory about her. Something of that, it seems to me, is in all association, or in coveted association, as we grow older, the association of those who knew us in the morning, loved us in our innocence, feasted us when we were not hungry, or gave us to drink from the waters of their life—when we no more knew we were thirsty than we knew we were sinners.

Time changes a good many things. It does not change these yearnings ; or, if it does, the change is an intensification. This instinctive return lifts us out of a good many stupidities. I have seen a fine old gentleman introduce, with manly and deferential pride, his horny-handed, peasant brother. He was his brother, and that was quite enough. They

honoured one another, these two, and sat with their pipes as equals, for to utter equality they had returned. It was all over. Everything that yesterday divided their sympathies or interests now was gone out of existence and memory. All they cared about was—‘We twa hae paddled in the burn.’ There is something like this in the great heart of the world, if you know how to get at it. It is worth while recalling how Charlotte Brontë came to write *Jane Eyre*. Emily and Anne were all for making their heroines beautiful; they avowed it was impossible to make any heroine acceptable to the public without bewitching charms of person. Charlotte would have none of it. She was convinced the wise public was accessible on other terms. When her sisters still withstood her, the indomitable little lady declared: ‘I will prove that you are wrong. I will show you a heroine as plain and as small as myself who shall be as interesting as any of yours.’ That accounts, perhaps, for the rather excessive emphasis her creator places on Jane Eyre’s want of beauty, her positive ugliness. But did not Charlotte carry her point? Jane Eyre goes flaming on her desolate way, and will go, just because she makes an elemental appeal, an appeal to something in us to which the most beautiful barley-water in the best possible cut glass never offers anything at all.

There is a way of getting under our every guard; blood does it; vivid personality does it. Because blood makes personality alive in incomprehensive

flashes and is steadily insistent among our fundamental emotions, we jump all the rest—as Charlotte Brontë’s readers never discover Jane’s ugliness, nor heed the common and trodden clay of her name. Of course there are people to whom a dandelion is never more than a weed and a pest. You remember how Macaulay hated them in his lawn at Holly Lodge: ‘I thought I was rid of the villains, but the day before yesterday, when I got up and looked out of my window, I could see five or six of their great, impudent, flaring yellow faces turned up at me. “Only you wait till I come down,” I said. How I grubbed them up. How I enjoyed their destruction.’ That is Macaulay all over—Macaulay the reviewer, above all. Yet even Macaulay knew better when his family garden grew dandelions. Really it is a blessed and a beautiful thing, this fertility of excuse for our own—for our ox and our ass, for our menservants and our maid-servants, for everything that is ours. All we need is to realize how much, how many are ours—Our Father which art in heaven. May I quote?

Let me grow lovely, growing old ;
The many fine things do,
Laces and ivory and gold and silks,
Need not be new.
And there is healing in old trees,
Old streets and glamour old.
Why may not I, as well as these,
Grow lovely, growing old ?

XXIII

ON REWARDS

EMERSON has said every man puts his hand to a poem, somewhere, but most men don't know which it is. The word is true enough—beautifully true. It must be remembered, however, it takes a good deal of study and training to know poetry. Dean Inge maintains that the reading of poetry is difficult and arduous, a duty or joy, to which a man must give the whole strength of his mind ; whereas we English read poetry in our listless moods, when we have nothing better to do, in odds and ends of time, as after we have taken our morning tea in bed. What the Dean has to say about poetry explains what Emerson says about most men not recognizing their own poems. It is possible we may forget, not be able to recall, as Captain Maryatt in his old age, when *Midshipman Easy* was read to him, would smite his knee, chuckle, or tumble about with laughter, saying, ' That's good, jolly good. Did I write that ? '—or words to the like effect. It is best not to be too literal with these old sea-dogs. The point is, however, most men, when

you tell them what they have done, what is the poetry of their deed, how beautiful, suggestive, and romantic that deed, how the word shone and spread and was akin to the Donne, Shelley, or Shakespeare, most men, I say, under these circumstances, want to know who you are getting at ; soberly and grimly quite understand you are just pulling their leg. The pity for most of us is that we don't know beauty when we see it, never or seldom connect anything of our own with beauty. The expositors of John Keats—of whom many have recently arisen—give themselves to the interpretation of the last two lines in the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*.

Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

We miss our reward, because we do not understand. The things we do or say—and good sayings are great deeds—bring with them no sufficient consolation and recompense, because we have an imperfect insight. The reward of a disciplined spiritual understanding, a divine insight, is that we do not take it amiss when by others we are ranked low or put under. We don't look for anything ; a certain joy is ours already—the joy of beauty and truth ; this joy is more than enough.

For these reasons it is always rather distressing to hear any man complain that the world's honours have passed him by, the Church has never fully recognized, or society has little appreciated. It is not

often this is done openly, though now and then you suffer even that. More frequently it is to be discerned in general statements, cynical aphorisms—borrowed, in an attitude of depreciation or loftiness, when another one cometh to honour. The French have a good many sayings under this head—true and untrue. Take three: ‘We only approve of equality when it places us on a level with our superiors’; ‘Commonplace folk get all because they disturb nobody’; ‘Great men only commence to live when they die.’ Always, however, when one comes across this habit, or eruptions of cynical depreciation, it is pretty safe to appreciate its autobiographical value. That man is thinking how he himself has not got what he ought to have got. It is probable, also, most of us had to have it out with ourselves, at some time or another; we had to get rid in one way or another of our sense of the injustice of this world—in its rewards. We could fancy ourselves, up there, in the chief seat to which he has been promoted—only ‘no such luck.’ That is not the way in our world. Indeed you will find, if you go through the old volumes of sermons preached thirty or forty years ago—or preached now, for the matter of that—a good many discourses given to the consolation of those who have somehow missed recognition, not having come to honour or fame. The preacher sets about comforting them in most peculiarly pagan style. The fact is to want a reward is far, very far away from the mind of Christ—and,

if I may say so without offence, from the mind of John Keats. Once we have a due appreciation of beauty, of truth, we have all. The two are little to be divided—though it is quite impossible for me here and now to go into that.

I mentioned sermons ; sometimes I have thought I would like to preach a sermon on Christ's saying about them that reap and them that sow rejoicing together. I never have done ; probably I never shall ; but there are ideas. One has heard preachers consoled for any lack of conversions by the suggestion that to keep a man a Christian is as good as making a man a Christian ; or to help a man to sanctification—to use the theological dictionary—is almost as good as to help him to repentance—and so on. The sowers and the reapers are both necessary to the harvest, and the share of reward will be adequately apportioned ' up yonder '—and all the rest of it. Only, when you have heard them all at it, all kindly comforting, you are *not* comforted ; they only bore you. Why ? Simply because the discerning mind realizes all this is utterly beside the mark, outside the view of a decent mind. Says Jesus, They that sow and they that reap rejoice together. What about ? Surely in the harvest. They don't think of what they have done, but of what everybody has got. It is no concern of theirs which did most ; there is neither sower nor reaper, only gay-hearted men and women gathered to feast a famous festival. The joy of harvest is a mystic joy. Think

Or

of yourself at all, and the spirit thereof has departed. There is poetry in a harvest home—in a harvest whether home or in the field there is high poetry, a certain lofty and world-embracing delight, whether of vision or of eternal bounty. It is *this* they rejoice in—not that they have got something after their sweat and grunt. The sweat and grunt are no more remembered, and every man is brother to his fellow, confederate with the sun, the moon, and the seven stars—a co-worker together with God. That is the mood; that is the healing of those who may chance of any discontent upon the disposal of the recognition and the rewards of service in any sort and any place.

Take the matter from another angle. Bentham, I think it is, has analysed what men regard as rewards to their labour. The result of the analysis is—pleasure, wealth, honour, power, exemptions. In these five ways, broadly speaking, do men confer upon one another recognition for work done. I suppose everybody will agree that the Christian religion lays emphasis upon the reward of power—the privilege and the capacity of service done is ability to do more service. So far one may go. That is in its kind a just and true statement of the Christian position. Yet how pedestrian it is—how prosaic, pedantic, and, I was going to say, inhuman. Such is the legal way of putting the reward of the righteous. Only very few of us, these days, enjoy thinking of ourselves as righteous. Under that head we shrivel. We are

just ordinary folk—don't want to separate ourselves from our fellows. We desire to keep our place among our kind, not willing to be singular, least of all to be boastful, and little disposed to complain. Somehow we take joy in being of the multitude; there hath nothing taken you but such as is common to man is a wonderfully consoling discovery. What is common to all cannot be a calamity. A fundamental characteristic is only, somehow, a blessing. That blessing we do not willingly forgo. And this is further to be said—no man who gets the reward of more power is very conscious of the increase. What he is conscious of is things to be done and—God over all. Where Bentham puts pleasure first, Jesus and the Christian puts something else, different though akin—joy. All the reward any Christian wants is Christian joy. Nothing better is to be found in the earth beneath or in the heavens above—nothing. And it is a fellowship, not an individual reward. There is always a peril when we segregate, for whatever motive—even for motives of piety and service. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has been argued—a woman. Sometimes I find internal evidence. Among those findings this has place—*that without us they should not be made perfect*. There is an almost tragic insight in that speculation. Joy is never quite joy unless it be shared. Joy will never be made perfect until it is universally shared. A mother of a family knows that, through all her household. So it comes to pass

that our separating ourselves and wanting our bits of monopoly in joy, our privileges and exemptions, is, as I said at the beginning, entirely and completely pagan.

How have we come to get so mixed into so remote and insalubrious a region of thought and speculation—being Christians? Well, it has been said that every profession is essentially a conspiracy. The writer, I believe, said this of the profession of the law, or of medicine; it is immaterial which. But the saying appears to me equally true of a profession of religion—even of the Christian religion. Perhaps that is some explanation of the modern disinclination to make what used to be known ‘as a profession.’ I do not think Jesus made what is known as a profession. What Jesus asked for was loyalty. Now a profession is apt to set up a system and to require loyalty to the system, regulations and rules, rather than to a principle or a person. A profession always looks too much in the direction of a monopoly, and, because of that squint, does not see clearly on the whole issue, as also it perverts loyalty, or some part of it, to uses of its own. Once loyalty becomes divided we know what happens. *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon*—though most professional gentlemen seem to agree with that Butler who was ‘begotten by *Hudibras* out of *Analogy*,’ that it is the only possible aim of life to serve both God and Mammon. Those, to return, who regard religion as a profession, the Christian religion as

especially a profession, lay themselves open to assaults from that ancient enemy of all joy—what shall we have therefore? Moreover, it has come to pass that the Christian religion owes a great deal, all through its history, to a professional class, peculiar in its sanctities, its aspirations, and its exemptions—priesthood, clergy, ministers—little distinction need be made. These have founded a kingdom within a kingdom, have stood out as representatives before the generations. The Church does them honour, putteth up one among them, and pulleth down another. Among themselves they receive honour one from another. With distinction and emphasis they represent the religion of Christ to the world in many of its formal and public aspects. To many the Church is merely the clergy. So it comes to pass as the clergy are rewarded, the Church thinks all should be rewarded—all workers, that is to say, and all who do and suffer in its name and for its sake. Thus it comes to pass that popularly the Christian religion presents a fictitious standard of apprisement, whether of persons or of achievement, as also a discontent borne of that fiction, spreading to the right and to the left. It is wrong in religion, it is wrong in psychology. You cannot ensure pleasure, much less joy, however much wealth, whatever power, or exemptions you bestow as reward. The joy of harvest is the only reward—and that is a mystic fellowship one with another and of all with the heavens and the earth.

XXIV

‘WHAT WE HAVE FELT AND SEEN’

IN the days of the ‘old-fashioned love-feasts,’ those blessed days when, being a boy, I yet loved love-feasts more than services, their variety of discourse better than one preacher—the bread and the water being a fearful joy—in those days, I remember a certain man, who became very dear to me later on, making a sudden diversion. He had got up to speak, to give his experience; immediately behind him crouched another man not given to speaking—he had nothing to say—he was given to ‘clarking.’ Immediately my friend gave utterance, this man gave mouth. Every sentence was punctuated for him with ‘Amen.’ So vigorous and obtrusive was this, my friend turned on his would-be helper, and flung out at him, with angry scorn, ‘Bless you, man, let me get off!’ The man crumpled up; but I don’t think my friend ‘got off.’

As much as any incident in any love-feast, I have thought on that. Every tone of it was primitive, characteristic, and immensely significant, as the

primitive always is. Of course, in those days, we *did* ‘work ourselves up’; we *had* ‘to get off.’ A certain rush and gusto, an unction and a visitation was on us. The winds blew; our banners took those winds with beauty. Yet, at the same time, these things being so, there was often an attempt to capture what did not come; we recollected certain styles fraught with possibility, certain touches, tempers, and gallant adventures in words, whetting the relish, kindling the emotions, stirring recollection, impulse, or habit; then we turned it on—if we did not get off. The device was perhaps not criminal, neither was it a mere trick; we were unconscious of incongruity; the psychology of ‘getting off’ was what it was; though we knew nothing about ‘this psychology’; we knew how to do it, and in the innocence of our hearts, to serve the necessary standing lights of the Sanctuary, we did not hesitate to finger the smoking flax. We are more austere in these days. I am not sure we are strictly more moral, or even more intellectual. Emotion has a spiritual, indeed an intellectual, value. Mark, I am not suggesting any sort of jugglery, any unworthy stimulant, or debasing gallery dodges; all I say is—emotion has its value. Poetry and religion are the twin children of the imagination; neither comes to its own, to health, to vigour, to conquest of any sort, without emotion. Poets put themselves in the way to make poetry. Primitive poets employed primitive methods, as rhythmic motion, and the

sound of the harp. The prophets of Israel, combining religion and poetry, did not disdain these aids. There are passages in Mrs. Campbell's *Shelley and the Unromantics* of high suggestiveness. She traces the whole romantic movement in literature to Jesus. 'And then came Christ. And Christ taught that all men were divine; that man was of one nature with God, that his own feelings, which hitherto had seemed almost only painful accompaniments of human existence, that those feelings were the best interpreters of God that he had: that to love God and his fellow men was the chief glory of life. Love was thus raised from a mere incident of ephemeral mortality to the preoccupation of eternity. The heroes of the Greeks were great only because of their power of achievement; the Christian hero is great also because of his power of emotion.' 'Nothing great,' says a chorus in the *Antigone*, 'enters the life of mortals without a curse.' It is a tremendous saying looking many ways; yet, once you confront that saying by the fact of the Incarnation—what becomes of it? The Christian religion really is 'designed,' was meant to place, and really does place far more trust in emotion—in love—than ever religion did before. After all, love is an emotion. It is an ethical emotion, or the emotion must express itself in ethics, in conduct. For all that, it remains fundamentally an emotion subject to the laws and liabilities of emotion. There is no evading these facts; and it is my deliberate opinion we have

made less headway in religion, and were bound to make less headway in religion, ever since we began to obscure these facts. We have been too much afraid of ‘getting off,’ or, at any rate, too much afraid of emotion.

The fact is, any man who ‘intends to lead a Christian life’—who takes with simplicity and sincerity the religion of Jesus—is bound to live dangerously. There are all sorts of pitfalls, holes, and nasty places into which he tumbles, headlong, immediately he is less than simple, other than sincere. Indeed the religion of Jesus is a dangerous religion from every point of view, dangerous to an ordered and alien community, dangerous to a half-hearted man, dangerous to folk in a hurry or casual; dangerous to those who are afraid of thinking, and most dangerous of all to those who like to keep up appearances and ‘pull things off.’ Because so many have tumbled into holes and nasty places, we at one time went about to fill them up or to suggest they didn’t exist; we have drawn a map of the good land, excluding these bogs and chasms. Yet Bunyan knew better, and did better. He put a slough at the very outset, and—well, we all know what an enterprise the pilgrimage proved to be. Boys read the story of it to-day, and tired men rejoice in it as a pure adventure, fascinating as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Treasure Island*. It is very easy to simplify and make safe the religion of Christ until there is much safety and adequate sociology, but neither Christ

nor religion. Jesus did not set out to save us trouble, but to save our souls, and a soul is a very troublesome thing to get saved ; it has so many vital interests at stake. We have now to recover the sort of thing at one time so popular in our love-feasts and so prevalent in our pulpits, and do the best we can to be just and indeed generous to these realities, without finical prejudices. I take it there are times when those who, being of the Church of England, rejoice in ' our incomparable liturgy,' yet have a fellow feeling for Methodist simplicity. I know there are Methodists who, after an experience of Methodist exuberance or lack of discipline, in their hearts do greatly yearn for ancient, romantic, and most perfect forms—where words do march as processional priests or take to white wings as do squadrons of angels. There is no utterly satisfying system. We cannot either devise or borrow from heavenly inspirations final and complete securities, such precautions as will deliver us from the narrow edge of things spiritual, the stern necessities of being alive, watchful, and of an utter gentleness before God. Indeed, in this sense it is eternally necessary for us to learn how to live in heavenly places—perhaps the most dangerous places of all to creatures such as we are. We have got to take risks.

This is essential ; other things are advisable simply because we are always mere explorers among the things of Christ. One of the most immediate of modern

necessities, for instance, it seems to me, is a certain watchfulness against the mere talker. My friend who could not get off, or was impeded in his getting off—his name was George Shaw, and I set it down with high love and honour—had a certain gift of discernment. When he *did* get off, the ministers and local preachers would look at one another with an air of perplexed surprise and wondering delight. This man struck out strange lights—when he *did* get off. He could only manage those lights at a certain temperature. Moreover, I always thought he could not utter himself at all save in a certain impetus. Now there are others who are able to go on, once they ‘ get off,’ and there was nothing of that discoverable. ‘ One weak, washy, everlasting flood ’ is not enough ; when you have got off, it sufficeth not that words fly about like bedraggled doves not finding any windows. Lost pigeons beating about any old barn, because it rains and snows, are a pitiful sight—yet not so pitiful as the sight of a religious speaker valiantly threshing the air—and nothing else. I have been greatly impressed by the immense improvement in our preaching style. Why, the grammar of the pulpit is now about perfect. Every local preacher, and I hear a great many, knows how to put a sentence together—passably. The pulpit has all its frills on ; its starch and manners are perfect, almost. Yet, coming out the other morning, an intelligent hearer turned to me and said as we went our way, ‘ Really, all this is perfectly hopeless.’ And

it was. I was not worshipping at home and no one will guess—the preacher least of all. Yet, as was said—it was perfectly hopeless. The preacher was an excellent talker—and no more. Blood and tears and vision had never visited him. The Christian religion was a great comfort to him, and he urged it upon you very much as a traveller in confectionery or chocolate might do—though I have not had any experience of these busy and prosperous men.

Do we not need to be on the look-out against ourselves as 'always on the bright side,' as evading the dark spots, accepting small explanations of great mysteries, as pert, smart, first-rate in repartee, making 'the other side' look silly or their case absurd—all these things, and many more, seem to me an offence against the enormous gravity of the controversy provoked by the teaching of Jesus. These methods strangle great emotions. But more dangerous than even these are the mere talkers, or those who snatch up a bushel of chaff and, casting it on the wind, imagine themselves as sowers going forth to sow. May I put it remotely? It is rather curious that, outside the Churches, there has been a discovery within my lifetime of two masters, two great poets, Blake and Keats. Within my lifetime, I insist, this passionate return has taken place. For both of them yesterday apologies were made; to-day men of the first genius—or of such genius as we have these days—bow down before them. Both have a meaning for religion as

few poets have had. I do not suppose they were either of them of the schools—of any school save their own. They had read and they had pondered many things ; you could not say they were exact and learned scholars. Indeed, few and simple are the fundamental problems ; an imaginative nature grapples with them by instinct. To know what the wise men were thinking was not the chief concern of Blake or Keats. They did their own thinking ; they sang as they felt. It was profound emotion set them on fire or gave them wings to go where be no problems, only an ecstasy of vision, hope, and joy. Have the Churches profited by this return, this discovery of Blake in particular ? Have they quite matched the adventure ? The discovery of Jesus in the Churches equals the discovery of Blake in literature ; but, just as all bookmen do not yet know what to make of Blake, and a great many are far to seek about Keats—so is it with Jesus among the Christians. Frankly, I think we have been too anxious about a cheerful religion, proving Jesus quite modern, natural, comprehensible, and one well-pleasing to—say, the Labour Party. It is a difficult and a most formidable enterprise interpreting Jesus—if only because first you must know Him. ‘The documents’—yes, you *can* find men to teach the documents. After that you must go your own way—and it will be a very lonely road, if you are fortunate enough to find the habitation of your soul. Here, again, the only way to understand Jesus is to love Him. We are always

upon this one desperate necessity immediately we approach Christianity as it is—the supremacy and the revealing of emotion, ‘what we have felt and seen.’

XXV

LISTENING TO LOCAL PREACHERS

LISTENING to local preachers has passed beyond the stage of habit and become a fine art. In times gone by we took to them as a matter of course, as we took to porridge at breakfast or small beer at supper. The extraordinary occasion was the minister. Fine arts needed applying in that direction. With the changing times, however, ministers have become a habit. I have been wondering how many have discovered the art of 'listening to locals.' I notice smaller congregations when they appear. The art is evidently not largely practised. Yet it is a most instructive, necessary, and improving exercise—this art of listening to local preachers.

What do I mean by it? Well, as a preliminary let us drop the word and look at the thing—the actual listening. Listening of any sort to anybody is a fine art—seldom appreciated at its full value. However, mere listening is, for me, an exceeding delectation, involving all sorts of familiar and unfamiliar reactions. I never listen to a local preacher without thinking of

the days and years when I was a local preacher. It is just about fifty years since I began cogitating my first sermon. It took a great deal of cogitating or ever it got preached. But there in the pulpit is a man—just such a man as I was in those days, only better equipped, more experienced, not so young, and therefore not so green. He carries me back fifty years—to familiar faces, silent voices, strange old chapels, vestries, and dirty roads—odd ‘dinner plans’; choirs and anthems, hymns and amens, come trooping back. I think of my own father; I can hear him ‘upstairs’ making his sermon—threshing it out till he got the sentence right, by the hearing of the ear. Anon I am among the twenty or thirty of them at the Local Preachers’ Meetings—surprised to see one or two things I certainly do see. Somehow I am reminded how these old fellows stood by one another, called one another by their Christian names, swapped texts, mentioned hymns, warned and exhorted one another—and above all stood shoulder to shoulder as a brotherhood within the brotherhood, stood shoulder to shoulder sometimes against the ‘super,’ and, often enough, against the Quarterly Meeting—but always shoulder to shoulder. Now, I hold that any man who carries me hence out of this body of this flesh and from the sorrow of this time, so far away and into so gracious a company, has served me well.

Then, of course, I can’t help comparing the man I listen to now—in this present time, in the present

chapel and pew—comparing him with the great old saints of other days. These great old saints of those other days had their fringe of circumstance—only, years have clipped the fringe away. To-day this man and the whole series of men bring with them their fringe unclipped. One compares. There is no harm in that. When you ask me to judge between the two, at once I am on my guard. There is no good in ‘making up your mind’—or little good. A mind made up is a mind closed; and a closed mind is not the best mind. So, no judgement—only contrast. The world has changed; I have changed; the Church has changed. All I can say about these contrasts is to disclose what I find myself liking—so judging myself, quite as much as the local preacher. Perhaps it’s odd, but I really *do* like a man to show a little nervousness. I don’t remember to have had any myself—very little of any sort, till I had turned fifty. That may explain it; still, the preference is there—a touch of diffidence, an air of tremulous constraint, anxious and burdened. *That* quickens my heart at once. Somehow a feeling of the strange and indeed terrifying possibilities, the tragic and enduring results possible to the adventure of preaching, the moved and moving emotions of a heart and a mind stirred up by the enormous facts and futures—these things take me home into worship and awe far beyond words. The overflow of the man is a revelation of the man. Any one, in a pulpit, who ‘shows himself master of

the situation' doesn't help me much. Moreover, homeliness is very precious. It seems to me a local preacher has more right to a fireside manner than any minister. Somehow a fireside manner becomes both of them if they know how to wear it—lightly like a flower. Still there falls a natural and a pleasant homeliness on one who has 'always been in this circuit' not a traveller, not an official—a man among his own folk, one who tarries by the stuff with a friendly face of all the week—*he* surely may be homely. Homeliness always was dear to me. It betrayed me sometimes. I remember a dignified old saint allowing it to be conveyed to me that 'lounging was not seemly in the pulpit.'

What more shall I say? There are two or three other things—not of manner—that seem to go deeper and mean more than manner. For instance, I like a local who knows Charles Wesley's hymns. Some Bishop the other day was lamenting the lack of new hymns. We had no chance because we had no new hymns—or words to that effect. Now, all I can say is I don't want new hymns; I want the old ones. In his latest book, Dr. W. J. Dawson quotes some of Wesley's hymns, and declares he would take a long, long journey to hear a congregation sing one or two he names—as 'Leader of faithful souls and Guide'—sung as they used to be sung when he went with his father to chapel. Well, one of the ways to this is for local preachers to know these hymns and to love them.

I heard one the other day whose every other sentence, almost, was out of the hymn-book—the old hymn-book ; yes, and he knew what he was saying—such and thus was the natural language of his heart and outlook. Why, these hymns, they give to any service nervous and spiritual tension, homeliness, a class-meeting touch, and a flavour of the very fruits of Paradise. Grammar never troubles me. There is seldom anything wrong with the grammar of any one who knows either his hymn-book or his Authorized Version. Pronunciation is no irritation. I can get enough pronunciation to last me all the week from the young sparks of the B.B.C. Indeed, just a tincture of incorrectness, whether of grammar or pronunciation, gives a kind of archaic graciousness to a discourse, not in any wise distasteful to me. It is like the edge of a rare wine—I suppose, not knowing anything about wines—to one skilled in vineyards and their vintage. Oh, but I have heard men drop into the Doric, lapse into the vernacular without knowing, just because they were caught up into the seventh heaven and must needs speak the tongue to which they were born, their childhood's joy and innocence. Also I like one who does not forget sinners—*the* sinners, and puts himself among them, talks to them as if he loved them and understood them, loved them all the day long and understood them as Jesus did.

Now, is it not becoming plain what I mean when I suggest that listening to local preachers is, even like

preaching, a fine art? By the way, I don't like local preachers who read their sermon; they ought to leave that to the ministers. Neither do I like to hear them either read or speak as if they had taken lessons in elocution and wished everybody to know. No, give me homeliness and naturalness—first of all and all the time. One of the most happy effects, one of the most spiritual uses of local preachers, yet remains. I always thought, in the old times, to listen to the local preacher was to feel the pulse of the circuit in a far more intimate way than you could listening to the ministers. These were men of the place—local in sympathy, outlook, temperament, tradition; they knew what other people were saying and thinking—behind the backs of the ministers. In the local preachers the spirit of a place found utterance; any who cared to sample the quality of the common religious life of the circuit were on the track when they took full account of the general tone and outlook of the local preachers of that circuit. Possibly, since the times of dearth, when local preachers are hardly local any longer, now that superintendents have to run through the whole city, neighbourhoods, and varieties of Church organization in order to fill their plan—now this spirit of revelation and this scope of possibility is not what it has been. Yet even to-day one surely gathers the aptitudes, outlook, and temper of the lay mind, the common possessions of the religious community, from the discourse and delivery of the lay preachers.

There is still broader significance. Of course, it requires imagination to listen to local preachers with these possibilities in mind—and that is why I have described such listening as an art. In the further extension, however, a yet higher style of imaginative achievement is necessary. These workmen, labourers, teachers, shopkeepers, artisans, on the Sunday in our pulpits, on the week-day are marked men in their separate and several spheres. In the factory and on the farm, among customers and scholars, in the warehouse and behind the counter—these are the men who all the day long, week in and week out, year after year, set forth in their daily life and conversation the values and the meanings of Christianity. Here they preach; there they witness. In the pulpit they are discerned of them that love their Lord; at other times, they are discerned of those who do not love *their* Lord—and in the eyes of those who do love they stand for their Lord. So it comes to pass, one is able, by local preachers, to estimate the quality of the Christian witness borne outside and in the intimacies of daily life. In these facts I have always felt there might be an explanation of the peculiar contact Methodism seems always to have had with what I may call the common people. Our ministers may have mingled more; it is certain the local preachers have mingled most.

When I began to preach, some of those who worked with me were quite keen to hear me preach—especially

were they keen on a week-day. On Sundays, they were usually keener on something else. Yet the fact remains—one may sample the agencies at work by listening to local preachers. And it seems to me the conditions under which local preachers live explain why I expect of them what I have called homeliness; they are in touch, unconstrained, familiar, free; religion, and the Christian religion, to them is close into the common things of life. They experience this; this shades and warms all their discourse. Would it be far out to suggest these conditions may also offer some explanation of a certain loving attitude towards ‘sinners’? I used the words ‘sinners’ as it is commonly used, and in no harsh way—a word for those outside. Our local preachers work among outsiders; they know their joys and sorrows, their weakness and their strength, their good as well as their evil. They stand in no remote relation, nor need they speculate heavily and solemnly on the thoughts and intents of their fellow workmen’s hearts. From them, therefore, one expects a certain actuality and tenderness, a quality of understanding and grasp, not easily attained in other directions. All I can say is—it really *does* seem to me a famous and a blessed art listening to local preachers. Of course, what I have written is individual. Those disposed to try or to weigh what is here set forth ought, above all things, to bear in mind the upbringing I have had and the wandering life I have lived.

XXVI

CHRISTIAN LIBERTY AND CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AS a matter of historic observation it is probably true that, in any conflict between the loyalty of the nobles to their order and to their chief, it is the order that has won. It was so in the days of King John and Magna Charta. Not always has the victory of the order been so open and dramatic ; it has been victory, for all that. In France, for instance, during the time of Louis XIV, the nobles often got their way in spite of the King. The King recognized it was necessary to yield, and did so with sufficient grace to cover his retreat. Louis XIV was not alone in this gift of discretion. In our own country, when Charles I found trouble—not with the nobles, but with a powerful class below the nobles—the order won. Men of religion, character, and substance, lovers of truth and their own civic freedom, constituted an order all the more powerful because it was not confined to one class. When this order, spiritual if complex, came into conflict with its overlord, it was the order that won.

Loyalty to a person gave way before loyalty to an ideal and a brotherhood. Since the King had no discernment in policy, and regarded his own prerogative as God-given, a sacred trust, the conflict went to final extremes. The King would not yield, and the King was crushed. My point, however, is that loyalty to a chief does not make headway against loyalty to an order. Affinity is stronger than authority. We may or may not approve ; that makes no difference. What actually happens is more important than what ought to happen. When, in popular rebellions, the common folk set out against their feudal chief, they were worsted because their own coherence was not so complete as the coherence of their feudal lords. That is to say, they had not sufficiently developed loyalty to their order. Organization was wanting ; often enough understanding was not given to sufficient numbers of them ; fear paralysed or self-interest submerged any consciousness of their own order. So, for a while, feudal chiefs ruled and decided ; the others bowed and obeyed—they had to. Once, however, the consciousness of a common life and lot, common interests, a brotherhood and a fellow feeling, spread and took in the majority of the subject community, the feudal lords found themselves helpless. Loyalty to a chief went down before loyalty to their own order.

This is surely a principle of immense importance, not merely for good government, but for good religion. It has its bearing not only on matters of State, but

on the interests of the Church. We hear a great deal about class-consciousness : means have been taken to promote class-consciousness ; many of those means seem to ordinary people little less than horrible. Yet, behind this strange and pathetic effort to develop class-consciousness, is this sound generalization—that against loyalty to an order little prevails. The order of the Jesuits builds upon this generalization. The Jesuit learned, had been so taught, that it lodged in his bones and blood, all his joints and every ounce of his marrow, that the order was everything and he was nothing. In trades unions the work of this principle is seen—both sides of it. There are leaders—chiefs—as Mr. Herbert Smith, Mr. Cook, Mr. Thomas, and the rest. Sometimes there happens to be conflict between the order and the chief. The organization has not subdued the understanding or the interest of its members into any common idea, has not brought them to any sufficient agreement. Then a schism appears. What the chief thinks, what the official decides, is not acceptable ; the natural affinities of men who work together, have games together, and live together, prove themselves the real order ; the artificial order of mere association and interest is submerged. A more fundamental order—natural, domestic, humane, not imposed or imported—takes control, perhaps not consciously, yet takes sufficient control ; and Mr. Cook, Mr. Smith—even Mr. Thomas, or another—get what is called ‘the mitten.’ If they are wise, or have

studied the tragic history of Charles I, they behave themselves wisely, in a way of meekness ; if not, they go to the wall and are done for—shot at dawn : the dawn of a better day. An order may be cultivated ; an order may be a manufactured article, set up for a deliberate purpose. Then it is generally precarious, throws far too much upon its leaders, administrators, and orators, often more than they are able to carry, and the end of that order arrives by the subtle and unobserved advent of an order more natural, spontaneous, and humane—working on simpler lines, from deeper springs, with wider accommodations. Yet with all this, the law, or generalization, still works, the principle is honoured, both in the breach and the observance—the principle that loyalty to a chief stands little chance when in conflict with loyalty to an order.

All this may seem rather revolutionary and in far too close keeping with the subversive teaching and subversive propaganda of our time. Yet, on consideration, will it not be found that any and every subversive propaganda must make sure of some sound principle, and work in some relation—however distant—to that sound principle ? The principle is not less valid and not less valuable because there may be those who put it to strange and mischievous uses. Obviously this principle lies at the very root of the Christian religion ; it explains the position and the power of the Christian Church ; it involves the highest

of all Christian doctrines—the doctrine of Christ's indwelling. Moreover, this principle, so often observed in secular and industrial history, is one to keep in subjection certain evil tendencies in the Church—as sacerdotalism, a masterful priesthood, or foolish and worldly ecclesiastics. It is impossible to draw out all these things, just now, or even to hint at a line of exposition. Yet it will perhaps be found there is a connexion between the possibilities of strength and recovery in the Christian Church and this wide and pregnant fact, a fact of human nature—the fact that loyalty to a chief generally, indeed always, goes down before loyalty to an order.

Let me make one or two remarks, or throw out one or two hints. The Christian Church may be regarded as an order—in some sort as much an order as an order of nobles over against a King ; as cities over against feudal lords and princes ; as workers over against employers ; as poor over against rich ; as sufferers over against tyrants and oppressors. In the Church are certain possessions, privileges, ideals, certain kindlings, affections, supplies of strength, means of vision—a whole economy and world of enlargement and equipment, of association and inspiration, in which every member is interested, and of which every member enjoys the entire scope and fullness. The Church becomes an order ; it offers a foundation of mutual security and brotherhood ; it trains and informs, quickens and warms all its members from out one

region and in one hope—they become one in a vaster and far more progressive and impressive sense than any other oneness conceivable in this system of things. Over against this order of the Church is—the world, claiming universal kingship. This holy community is invaded and threatened, sought to be used and dominated by principalities and powers ; these selfless labourers are invited to pledge themselves to others—aliens and strangers—to spend their souls for them and their ends ; the poor and meek are despised by the rich and the proud ; these sufferers are made naught of by the strong and proud and mighty. The Church really is an order—in much the same position and under much the same conditions as any other order. The sooner we fully recognize that fact, the better we may be able to guide the Church, to behave ourselves in the Church, or carry ourselves towards the Church. What this involves for Christian Union it is not necessary to say. What it involves for morals, for politics, for literature, art, and society, I would like to illustrate—only that is entirely impossible.

Evidently there is a peril in this conception ; equally is it evident there may be a division, a conflict between loyalty of the order to its own members, its own interests, and loyalty to its chief. An order may set itself to destroy its founder. Emerson has said every institution is but the lengthening shadow of one man. Somebody else has said that the fate of every idea is that those who serve it slaughter it ; a truth is

loved, then those who follow that truth fall upon it and finish it. Methodism *may* make an end of John Wesley's work. It has been roundly asserted again and again that the chief obstruction to Christianity is found in the Churches; Christianity has destroyed Christ. All this we are bound to acknowledge and confess. We who are ministers of Churches may make those Churches not only to stink in the nostrils, but turn the Churches aside from the fundamental loyalties to which they are pledged. This is so. The mere stupidity of man is unaccountable and beyond all estimate. There is no fool-proof idea in Christ's great vision. Human folly is allowed for; it cannot be provided against. Christ didn't so much as try. He preferred that men should play the fool if they were so minded. He knew they would, and took it quite calmly, since He saw the end from the beginning. In view of this, consider one thing—the fact that Christ claims something quite stupendous—*I in you and you in Me*. The Christian society is more than an order; it is a Church. That is to say, Christ hoped the order He set up would be merely an extension of His own personality. I do not quite know how to illustrate *that*. There is nothing quite like it anywhere else. Yet Jesus quite simply said: *Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world*. John goes deeper. His word is not *with*: it is *in*. There are those who think this only means *in* the Church. That does not seem to me quite good enough. From all appearances, and

from my reading and observation, *that* would fail. No ; Christ in the Church and Sacraments is not good enough ; is less than sufficient, as any trades union leader will tell you. What an order needs is, every member of the order in the front rank of utter loyalty—absorbed, dominated, or inspired by the fundamental idea. *That* Christ's indwelling achieves. *I in you and you in Me*—how is there going to be conflict between any headship such as that and members presenting any such spiritual phenomena? The fact is Jesus staked everything on there being no sufficient number of stupid persons in the Church to put Him and it to an open shame. Jesus counted on education—yes, on education, on Christian education. We cannot afford, in the Church, to cultivate ignorance ; ignorance easily becomes indifference. Indifference *always* collapses as soon as you touch privilege. The order and its Lord become estranged, and divine things shrink and cower amid the enmities and crimes of earth.

XXVII

NONE GOOD SAVE ONE

‘**Y**ES,’ he said, ‘there is nothing like sixty years for taking the conceit out of you. The remedy for thinking too much of yourself is to go on living and thinking ; then you worry through into a sensible view ; or you are wretchedly worried by all sorts of hounds and mongrel curs, and it becomes at last your only escape to take refuge in a very moderate view of your own capacity and work. Also, the clearer a man becomes in judgement, the more insight he attains into values ; the better he is able to weigh and balance results, the less is he disposed to think he has done very much or that any man can do very much. It is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth.’ So he rambled on. I was rather surprised ; he had been a hard worker and a particular admirer of all hard workers. Suddenly the doctors had ordered him three months’ rest—engaged, if he would rest those three months, he might, after, be as able to work as ever he had been. For that hope he consented to three months ; and the interesting result to me was that, after one month, he didn’t want to work as hard as he had ever

done. He wanted to be quiet and look on. We had been friends many years ; we could talk—for my own comfort. To tell all the truth, I had been feeling the uselessness of a good many of my busy occupations—the entire futility of them, so far as I could see. So I probed my friend's slackness to search my own, to find company in laziness, or self-respect in my happy languor. This was what I got : The remedy for thinking too much of yourself is just to go on thinking and living. It seemed to be our opinion we had both of us been thinking far too much of ourselves—thinking things wouldn't get done unless we did them ; or things wouldn't get said unless we said them. Then it occurred to one of us to ask whether it was necessary things should be done, or what actually came of saying things ; and—God help us !—we didn't know what to say for ourselves with our doings and our sayings. We tumbled together all in a heap. We looked into one another's eyes for a moment—eyes stricken with consternation—then exploded in what is often piously called Homeric laughter—though why Homeric I can't say.

When it was all over and we had reached some sort of agreement, we said the one to the other, ' But we must never say such things as these to our young friends ! ' I think I said that ; then it was broken out upon me, ' Bless your innocent heart, do you think it will matter a brass farthing what we say to the younger end—what you patronizingly call " our young

friends " ? ' And *does* it often matter what we do by way of dispensing mature observations? Nature, something in the world, a general throb and push that pumps itself into each new generation, decrees our young friends shall do as we did, believe in themselves, be quite confident that now, with them, has come the day of salvation. This something in them—be it what it may, or come it from whence it may—provides our young friends a natural unguent. You may pour whole barrels of liquid and sage reflections upon them, and all you pour trickles off the dear ducks' backs—and they go waddling off to the ponds and the puddles once more to enjoy their natural feed. Probably one of the worst things that could happen to civilization, to art, literature, or religion would be for the young meekly to accept the advice of the old. I *do* see that. To see it relieves me of one or two irksome duties. Moreover, it induces in me a certain economy in counsel. I save up my occasions of giving advice, don't use them in hope that, when I feel I really *must* this time, something may come of it. One should think often, and then think again and deeper, before running clean contrary to so obvious a principle as embodies itself in the natural disinclination of the young to accept advice—which really means imposing our reading of the universe, our interpretation of values, our dictation as to outlook. If that had been the rule from the first, Adam would still be delving and Eve spinning. What *can* you do? You know the young folk are making

a mess of things ; their feet swift to shed innocent blood—their own innocent blood ; you blurt out before you know ; and then you are regarded with dazzling eyes of lively amusement, patronage, scorn, impatience—and, if you are greatly beloved, you are pushed back into your seat and told not to make a fuss—it's all right ! If you are *not* greatly beloved, you suffer the bludgeon, as best you may, and glory in your heroic head—bloody but unbowed. That's about the style of it.

And you might perhaps say, even in matters of this kind, life is all of a piece. What really matters is not the particular instance of counsel or correction, whether you gave the advice in its best form and it was taken in the best temper, but whether, on the whole, the result worked out pretty decently—although on both sides, as you now think it over, there might have been wiser management and sounder sense. Poets have dreamed of flawless gems—one entire and perfect chrysolite ; few dealers handle them, and wise dealers do not believe in them. Desire colours all ; we see with the same eyes that kindled our longing. I have often thought of the dispute between Romeo and Juliet—whether the wakeful bird of morning was a lark or a nightingale. Since it is one of the loveliest things in literature, we may perhaps indulge ourselves. Juliet complains—

Wilt thou be gone ? It is not yet near day :
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,

That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear ;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate tree :
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

To whom Romeo—

It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale ; look, love, what envious shapes
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east ;
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops ;
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

Well, it is beautiful enough, is it not ? I could forgive Juliet all her blindness for that most exquisite return—perhaps the finest in all English poetry—‘ Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.’ But judge, if you can, how stupid of the lady ! Given over utterly to her love, living in it, oblivious of all else save the passionate tumult of her clinging ; all ends in pale despair, in cold tranquillity and the strange web of human things ; but just here and now it turns upon whether the wakeful bird was lark or nightingale. Romeo knew, as man generally does. Juliet did her thinking with her heart, and it was exceeding beautiful ; only it meant false witness. A bird is the same bird, for all any nymph of the downward smile and sidelong glance can do or dare. Not even Juliet can change the nature of things. Even Romeo plays his mandolin upon the dawn, instead of getting away at once—and that's the stuff our youth is made of. Do you wonder there is a temptation to interfere ?

Let me give a more prosaic illustration. When I was a young man under twenty, I had a post offered in a Yorkshire mill, of considerable responsibility and far more than ordinary emolument. My father went with me to interview the millowner. The particular partner concerned had made up his mind, and not even my father could at all impress him with the danger of trusting so young a man. At last the post was accepted: I was to begin. As we were coming away, my father turned and said, 'Well, he's very young, and, of course, I will come down myself now and then, and just see how he is going on.' The millowner turned on him with something like a fury in his eye—'You'll do nothing of the sort. You old chaps think the young ones can do nothing at all. I won't have you about the place.' He banged the door upon us, and my father could only laugh an uneasy laugh of dismay, surprise, and joy. I stayed with those millowners till I went into the ministry. My brothers after me went to them, and, till business changed, they were to all of us kind and generous employers. But the point of the illustration only comes out when I say that the millowner who 'set me on,' died in the parish poorhouse. His faith in the young, I am glad to say, did not perhaps serve him ill so far as my brothers were concerned, but the disposition, the temper of mind out of which this audacity leaped fifty years ago and more, was undoubtedly the undoing of my kindly first master in a very kind firm. It is

inevitable that the young should be sanguine, hearty, adventurous, and confident. It is equally inevitable the old be crabbed, as Shakespeare puts it—himself not living to be old—pragmatical, cold, wise, slow, and of little venture. The two ages get mixed up together, rub off their corners as best they may, and the world shogs. 'Our bad neighbour' makes us early stirrers—which is both healthful and good husbandry.

Our great revivals begin to smoke sooner or later, and so cloud the pure heavens. Think what we are all about these days—Christian reunion. The Church of England asks her scattered children to return home. Among our own people there are many who vehemently desire to return, and yet there was a time when the Church of England thought it did good service by casting out the bondwoman and her children. Pure Episcopacy, pure Sacramentarianism, pure worship, order, and discipline, were necessary to be maintained, cost what they might. On the other hand, men like John Wesley took matters in their own hands and set up conventicles, dared divisions—in the name of purity—to serve divine grace and truth, otherwise not sufficiently served in the land. It all seemed very necessary and just. Now we are beginning to wonder. We see what was lost, and wonder whether a better way might not have been found. English religion paid a great deal for John Wesley. The separatist spirit made a home in Methodism, much against Wesley's

intention. After Wesley was removed, it broke out early, often, and about a variety of things. They went out from one another, and found they couldn't manage at all, so began coming together, reunited but not re-born. Now we are being re-born. It was all very sad ; what interests us to-day is that it was also very silly. Luther is sometimes spoken against, challenged by his children ; Europe had to pay for Luther even more than England had to pay for Wesley. We can see all this on the big scale of Luther and Wesley. Yet there is just the same fatality—human evil at work on the humbler scale of you and me. Some gleam of these things visited Paul when he could only think of Christ. Anyhow, it visited the two of us as we sat that day with our measuring-line. I recall in times of dearth, when fuel was scant and poor, seeing grey-headed men, with quiet and patient faces, working over the rubbish-heaps of human effort—to find a few cinders, in hope to comfort the home with fire. Is it not a parable of the divine ? We pile up our heaps, and God goes over them—and that's why there is nothing done under the sun but God Himself doeth it.

XXVIII

THE ELEMENTS OF PRAYER

‘PRAY without ceasing’ has always been a hard saying. To some it has appeared an unreasonable demand, a kind of heartless and intolerant insistence upon the claims of religion to the neglect of many weighty matters of the law of life. How can a labouring-man, a busy housewife, a shopman, a carpenter, pray without ceasing? Well, anything that is impossible can never be good religion, can never be a demand made by Jesus Christ. But *is* it impossible? Most of us make the mistake of looking at this saying with the clock in our mind, instead of considering what is meant by prayer. Mere duration has been our snare. We go to the prayer-meeting for our conception of prayer, and then say to ourselves that such exercises all the day long would make life impossible. But prayer-meeting ideas of prayer are, at their best, only partial and temporary; at their worst they may even be mischievous. Prayer is a vitality of many aspects; its streaming forth has great variety in the flow. When Paul seeks its perpetuity

he is entreating his friends to be always under its dominance, that each successive moment of life shall be inspired and controlled out of the deep where prayer is born. We cannot imagine Paul regarding prayer as a mere thing of quantity, to be measured by time. Rather he gathers together all aspects of prayer, and the command is that in one or other of its glories we are to be sunning ourselves all the day long.

Simple-minded Christians, good earnest souls with a literal habit, have wrested this Scripture to find warrants for tricks and suggestions that greatly impoverish the idea of prayer. I have heard a housemaid exhorted to use the daily round of her duties as a kind of allegory upon which she might base a series of supplications to the Almighty, that He would do for her what she was doing for the house of her mistress. Many a labouring-man has received like counsel—a stonebreaker to be continuously praying that God would break his rocky heart; a ploughman that God would break up his fallow ground; a carpenter that God would fasten every nail of His Word in a sure place; and so on—with most ingenious and improving misunderstanding of Paul's precept. It is not merely that in this method of reading this and other Scriptures there are grievous pitfalls, and occasions when the weak piety that is fed on such expedients will find itself confounded, but there is the more serious objection that such a view is a sorrowful depletion of the idea of prayer. Prayer is not merely asking for

things. If we confine our practice to a single detail, and mistake it for the whole, our entire life will suffer. Indeed, it is impossible to ask anything as we ought to ask, unless we have a thought above mere asking. Unless the domain of prayer is to us a wide and glorious kingdom we shall never be able to find in it the secret of prevailing and possessing.

What, then, is prayer? To get the answer, let us look at our own hearts, at the hearts and histories of God's people, at their best. We are not in search of a definition ; we are trying to look at life and to recognize the instinct of prayer under any form it may assume ; not seeking to reach philosophic formula, but to feel heart-beats. Now, is there not a sort of borderland region, a kind of exercise that is not quite prayer and yet has some of the qualities and powers of prayer ? Though you cannot find the flower and proceed to botanize, this borderland is full of fragrance. It is a common enough experience to have moments of detachment, when our spirit retreats inward or finds wings for the heights, when we fall into reverie ; moments of aloofness, when we fall to musing and meditation. In this region reverie passes almost insensibly into prayer, in all its forms, whether of communion, supplication, or intercession. ' While I mused the fire burned,' said one of old ; ' then spake I with my tongue.' The direct prayer that comes to birth when one has pitched his tent in this enchanted ground is perhaps the most intimate, the most searching

and prevailing, ever offered. Then the heart seems caught away before the mind has time to recognize the translation ; the mind follows on slower wing, not content to be found unfruitful : but it is the heart that leads. Here a man finds himself talking solemnly and sweetly with his Father in heaven. If he has a consuming passion, if he has a continual desire, a holy ambition for himself or another, it is then that the request is urged in most submission, but also with most power. Often the words that rise are pure praise, or the tender clinging of spirit that is as if the heart put out hands to feel, to hold, to come near and nestle. Even then, while praying, softly the flame sinks, and you are back upon your meditation, thinking and questioning and murmuring blessed things to your soul, as in a sweet soliloquy. It is prayer, and yet not prayer. It is a searching of the heart among the things that are laid up for them that love. It is a faring to and fro among the green pastures and beside the still waters—a communion and a fellowship with dear and precious things ; and when it is put that way, though it be but the borderland of prayer, it is rich, deep, pregnant with moulding issues.

I have used the words communion and fellowship ; but this borderland communion, this fellowship that arises out of our reveries, and meditations, is often only a casual and accidental thing. It is often one of the peaks to which we climb but for a moment, one of the peaks that rise out of the rich and quiet valleys

of life. But there *is* a communion and fellowship that is set, sustained, sought for, and attained in rich and prolonged fullness. A man sometimes finds the call of God upon him. He is not anxious for any gift : he wants God. He is homesick. He wants to be back to his first habitation—to be a little child once more, at rest in the everlasting arms. Then, making a solitude in his chamber, he pours out his heart to God. There is no reverie, no meditation : the call is too urgent, the desire too passionate. He spreads every highway and every by-way of his nature open, and seeks heavenly control over the things that go up and down these pathways. He asks nothing. He praises, worships, adores. His emotions are gratitude, companionship, awe, joy, peace, rest, aspiration, consolation, and all the deathless desire to be hid with Christ in God. This is what, in its fullness, I name communion and fellowship, and without it prayer would miss its golden crown, its spotless robe.

What is the secret of this dwelling in the borderland of reverie and meditation, of this passing within and giving ourselves to fellowship and communion ? Why do such moods and desires visit us ? I think the one satisfying answer is because we love. No man takes himself apart and finds solace and cheer in communion unless he loves the God he adores. And it is probably most surely true that when we brood and meditate, when we dream and soar with freedom, untrammelled, love is the secret and spring. We seek God because

we love Him : we dwell upon His treasures because the very fringes of His garments are a joy to us. In all its richer forms, love is the very spring and impulse of prayer. When love is cold there is no primal force ; we have to drag ourselves to our knees and keep ourselves there by sheer force of will, struggling all the time with chance desires. The deeper movements of our heart are all of love, and prayer is no exception to the rule. In all love there is prayer. In the love of God there is all prayer. There, in its burning heart, is the only begetter of every ensuing act and effort of high communion. And this fact helps us to another enrichment of the idea of prayer. It may be said that all love is prayer—prayer in essence, precious and prevailing with God and most fruitful within ourselves. Denied all other outlet, when we love we pray ; our love pours itself out before God in supplication. When we love God, we commune with Him for His own sake. When we love our fellows we are impelled to commune with Him for their sake. But whatever be our genuine affection it has this quality, that it catches us away to prayer. For those we love most, we pray most. The purer the love, the purer the prayer. Prayer, then, is not an effort ; it is an instinct. The very thought of the loved one breathes a hallowing and a rising of the soul. When a good man loves much, the difficulty is to be still from pleading. In one sense, the finding of difficulty in Paul's exhortation, ' Pray without ceasing,' is a reproach to any man, argues that he has

never given himself, never really burned in heart toward either God or another. If he had, surely he would understand the heart that is a fountain night and day. The order of the qualities of that great joy and privilege we call prayer is love, communion, meditation. These three are all of the richer substance of prayer, and it is here, when we see it at its fullest and purest, that we understand prayer is, of its own nature, unceasing, that the commandment is not grievous, but natural, inevitable.

Nothing has been said, so far, of the ordinary conception of prayer as asking things. I have not reserved this aspect from any sense of its frailty, its inconsequence, or from commiseration of its weakness. Not one word is to be said against this simplest, lowest form of prayer—the asking for earthly benefit. How can any man so offend, when he has proper regard to Christ's word—' Ask and it shall be given you ; seek and ye shall find ; knock and it shall be opened unto you ' ? There is a large and liberal warrant, a marvellous and unspeakable succour, of which we must never cease to seek avail. But is it not true also that the longer one lives the less one asks for particular things, and the more one is led to rest in the Lord and to wait patiently for Him ? Only, let it be said frankly and cordially that asking for things is perfectly right, if one desires them very much. Our impotence sometimes baffles all about us save our prayers, and our wants drive us home when nothing else would.

And, indeed, there are sudden crises, quick emergencies when we are unexpectedly assailed; and, however much we may in our still hours imagine that asking for direct intervention is inadvisable or possibly wrong, in these times of sudden peril we cannot help ourselves; our spirits dart to God, and cry and climb and cling, whether we will or no. No man can convince us that so vigorous and universal an impulse is folly. As well challenge the right to tears, or laughter, or sudden shame. This imperious habit is as old as the race; and, in one form or another, is as universal as the race. While it remains, God has not left Himself without a witness. But so far has it invaded life that it needs to be kept in some discipline. It is not in it that we seek the flower and the fruit of our love to God, nor the summit of our relations with Him. But it is not a thing to be ashamed of, nor to be apologized for. For the sudden need, seen and palpable, there is the sudden prayer. Disciplined and informed, inspired and guided by the Spirit of God, this gift of the human heart may become one of the chief factors in the Kingdom of God. In the form of intercession, it has a Christlike quality that is beyond all understanding as it ventures, and is counted worthy to venture, into the fellowship of His sufferings. If any man fears because it is hinted that this power of prayer needs rigorous discipline, let him comfort his heart with the truth that, to God, nothing is sudden. He is never taken unawares. We are not left desolate because we did not see. And He does

not stand on terms, determined to do nothing, unless we ask first. He is above a smallness of that sort.

‘Pray without ceasing’ does not mean ‘Be always asking for something.’ Paul did not mean that, like whining children, we are to be always dogging the steps of our Heavenly Father to remind Him of something we need. He did not mean that we are to go meandering on through a list of things we think may chance to be useful, and that we should occupy our time in constant prayer in the hope that we may happen on a few extra. The man who so thinks of prayer will always have difficulties about prayer. We should think of prayer as love, communion, meditation, supplication. Prayer has all these four aspects, each burdened and brightened with infinite variety, and blessedly intermingled with the others.

